

TUESDAY, 16 OCTOBER 2012

ESTIMATES—EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE—EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Estimates Committee Members

Mrs RN Menkens (Chair)
Mr TS Mulherin
Mr SA Bennett
Mr MA Boothman
Mr MR Latter
Ms A Palaszczuk
Mr MJ Pucci
Mr NA Symes

In Attendance

Hon. J-PH Langbroek, Minister for Education, Training and Employment
Ms F Crawford, Chief of Staff
Department of Education, Training and Employment
Ms J Grantham, Director-General

Committee met at 9.30 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this estimates hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee now open. This committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the portfolios of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment and the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: from 11.30 am to 12 pm, for a lunch break from 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm and from 4.30 pm to 5 pm. We will commence today's hearing by examining the budget estimates for the Education, Training and Employment portfolio. On behalf of the committee, I particularly welcome Minister Langbroek and Director-General Ms Julie Grantham, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. I also welcome the Acting Director of the Queensland Studies Authority, Mr Peter Luxton, who under schedule 7 of the standing orders may, along with the director-general, be asked questions directly by the committee.

I am Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin and chair of the Education and Innovation Committee. The other committee members are Mr Tim Mulherin MP, member for Mackay and deputy chair; Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, member for Inala; Mr Steve Bennett MP, member for Burnett; Mr Neil Symes MP, member for Lytton; Mr Michael Latter MP, member for Waterford; Mr Mark Boothman MP, member for Albert; and Mr Michael Pucci MP, member for Logan. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. The members for Bundamba and Rockhampton will be joining us during the proceedings relating to the Education, Training and Employment portfolio.

I remind all those participants in the hearings today that these proceedings are proceedings of parliament and that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair. The committee has resolved that the proceedings of the committee be broadcast and that photography be allowed subject to the conditions for broadcasts of proceedings and

guidelines for camera operations in estimates hearings. I ask that mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or switched to silent. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement. I remind you that there is a time limit of three minutes for such a statement.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair, and it is a pleasure to be here and welcome especially new members of the government to their first estimates hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee. I have said before in this place that the Premier read my appointment as the Minister for Education, Training and Employment and made a very clear statement that education would no longer be siloed as its own consideration. It would be given a story and the story is that from the moment a child begins their educational journey in one of our kindergartens to the moment that they are employed in the Queensland economy this government is committed to giving them the basic skills, pathways and qualifications to succeed in their chosen career.

The first six months of the Newman government have not been easy. As ministers entered their department for the first time after the election, we were faced with the terrible financial situation that was at best the by-product of the Bligh government's neglect and at worst its vandalism. In the Department of Education, Training and Employment the outcomes that were being achieved were happening despite the government, not because of it. And so it was that we had to make some difficult decisions, and I do not say that slightly. Whether it was corporate staff or programs that were affected, these difficult decisions were not reflections on the performance of the staff or the value of the program. They were decisions that were unavoidable due to the reckless mismanagement of the previous government. And so in this opening address I wanted to outline for the committee the full story so we do not spend our valuable time here, as I have seen in the past, engaged in grandstanding or insincere indignation.

The Department of Education, Training and Employment is the second largest employer in government, with almost 67,000 full-time equivalent employees. About 95 per cent of DETE employees work in schools and TAFEs, with the remainder in central and regional offices. As part of the fiscal repair strategy, the department was required to review its workforce and program allocations to assist in getting the state finances back on track. We approached this task through reviewing non front-line vacant positions that were funded but not filled across the department, examining non front-line temporary roles that were due to cease or that could be ceased with appropriate notice to employees, and identifying permanent positions that were considered surplus to the future requirements of the department's business needs. Staff in these positions were offered the opportunity to be deployed or to accept a voluntary redundancy.

Since the election the number of positions—as opposed to people—impacted by this workforce reduction strategy totals 1,140. Let me stress that point: this is 1,140 full-time equivalent positions, not 1,140 people. As outlined in the budget papers, the number of permanent staff accepting a voluntary redundancy was 405. In a large, complex and dispersed organisation such as DETE, there is always a proportion of vacant positions, temporary positions and permanent staff turnover. These are unrelated to this fiscal repair strategy. Many of these temporary positions were due for cessation at the end of the financial year to align with the budget cycle and the nature of the business project work that these positions supported. Some 359 temporary staff ceased employment with DETE since the 2012 state election, with termination reasons equivalent to ceasing to support the fiscal repair strategy.

As I mentioned earlier, we were confronted with a difficult financial situation when we came to office. Despite having to make difficult decisions, we have maintained our pre-election commitment to front-line services. In school education this has meant prioritising classroom teaching and existing class size targets. To this end, we expect that teacher numbers, teacher aides and support staff numbers in our schools will grow by some 270 FTEs from the start of the 2013 school year. This is outlined in the budget papers.

I also note that we had to cease the Skilling Queenslanders for Work—another difficult decision. This is not a judgement on the merits of the programs but rather an unavoidable decision in a difficult economic circumstance. I have met with representatives from these groups and I recognise the outcomes they achieved. We need the federal government, as we have said in the parliament, to step up to the mark here, as these are the responsibilities of the federal government and in difficult budget circumstances we must only undertake our core responsibilities so as to deliver on our responsibilities effectively. I have written to federal ministers Shorten and Evans about this issue, including the need for the Commonwealth to commit to the entire spectrum of employment programs. I look forward to their reply.

Madam Chair and committee members, I have no doubt that we will here today discuss a range of difficult decisions that have been made by me and my department. I hope this opening statement sets the tone. Having sat on the other side for a number of years, I promised I would not engage in the same obstructionist tactics of the previous government. My ministerial colleagues have demonstrated this so far. I look forward to all members recognising this commitment and pursuing lines of questioning with a genuine desire for information.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now start by examining Education. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members. I call the member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, I refer to the SDS and the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006. Section 5(1)(b) relating to objects of the act essentially says to provide universal access to high-quality state education. Minister, do you believe that your job as minister is to provide universal access to high-quality state education?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and it is obvious that that is exactly what we want to do and what I want to do as the Minister for Education. But it is also important to note that we have circumstances in Queensland that are different to other states in Australia. We have the most decentralised state of course, and in fact we make sure that students all over the state do get access to that high-quality education, even though on many occasions we have to spend a lot more money to do it. That is one of the things that I am very proud of in the state education system—that is, even though they may be in the Torres Strait or in rural and regional Queensland and even with special circumstances here in Brisbane and in metropolitan areas, that is our commitment. We make sure that we have to provide for many people who otherwise would not get the provision through the other sectors of the education system.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Minister. You just emphasised how important it was for universal education, especially across regional Queensland. The travelling show school travels across regional Queensland and in fact you have axed this as part of your government's cuts. Can you please advise the committee how many times you visited the Queensland School for Travelling Show Children before you decided to close the travelling show school?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and advise the committee that when we are making these decisions there are three processes to the decision. One is to have a discussion of course with the Cabinet Budget Review Committee, and it would be inappropriate of course to be discussing any of those sorts of matters with affected stakeholders. Whilst this was a difficult decision that will save our budget about \$1.5 million, it is something that on the day of the budget announcement someone in my department made a call to the travelling show school, as I did to a number of other stakeholders. It is important to note that we also have continued to meet with them afterwards. The salient point about all this is, coming back to the honourable member's first question which asked if we are committed to providing a quality education for all Queenslanders, when we look at the statistics of the travelling show school they really do not stand up to the scrutiny and analysis that shows that they are getting as quality an education as they might be. We only have to look at the attendance record with 84 per cent attendance, bearing in mind this is a school that accompanies them—

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you want to go from 84 per cent attendance to zero attendance?

Mr LANGBROEK: There is an 84 per cent attendance record when the school actually accompanies them at the school, so that means eight out of 10 days they are at school but nearly two out of 10 they are not. Of course we are also very concerned about the NAPLAN results when we look at the statistics of the travelling show school, and we believe we are offering much better outcomes through distance education. We have been committed to working with the people from the travelling show school to make sure that they are given a better alternative. Can I just say to the honourable member that if she is going to be standing out there protesting with the travelling show school parents, as she has already been doing this morning, she is actually standing up for their poor attendance record and their poor NAPLAN results. Something that she should also consider is the fact that they are not all from Queensland. In fact, the travelling show school, as I understand it, is in Adelaide today.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, I dispute that. I believe in the right to universal access to education, which you actually supported in your first answer to my question. Minister, is your Chief of Staff answering questions? She is sitting at the front table.

Mr LANGBROEK: I beg your pardon?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can I ask a question to your Chief of Staff? She is sitting at the front table.

Mr LANGBROEK: No. Through the chair you can ask me a question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: All right. I will direct it to you. Minister, you would have been present at this meeting. Is it true that your Chief of Staff said in a meeting with the travelling show people, 'Why should we keep you when you have been slagging us off in the media'?

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Chair, I am happy to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Did your Chief of Staff say that? Yes or no?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is disgraceful conduct for a Chief of Staff.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I just make the point here that whilst we have had meetings with the travelling show school this is all about making sure we get the best outcomes. I have already outlined to the committee that it is clear from the travelling show school that whilst they are personally aggrieved

about the situation because it means that there is going to be change for them having to go to the school of distance education—as we already have with a number of people on trawlers, as we have with farmers, as we have with people who work throughout Queensland and who are achieving great results—it is important for the people from the travelling show school to understand that we want to work with them and that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Did your Chief of Staff make that statement in a meeting?

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Chair, with respect, I do not believe that this has anything to do with the actual consideration of the budget estimates.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It has a lot to do with it.

Mr LANGBROEK: What we are specifically speaking about are the facts to do with—

Ms PALASZCZUK: ‘Why should we keep you open when you have been slagging us off in the media?’

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, I will take that as a comment.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are refusing to answer that question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, that is not really a question. If we are speaking about the outcomes for the travelling show school, we are committed to working with them. We have done so since the budget announcement to offer them an alternative. These are parents who are saying that the travelling show school is able to provide a better education than distance education. I am confident, having been a student of distance education myself, that the processes have changed a lot in the over 40 years since I did it, but that even in the 15 years or so since the parents of the travelling show school did distance education and found that it was not for them. It is not paper based anymore. Through technology we are able to offer solutions a lot different from what was originally offered. That has been our commitment to the people from the travelling show school. But one thing we will not do, I can say to the honourable member, is simply because there is an orchestrated campaign, whether it is by a union or by the travelling show school to attempt to get some media out of this issue—we are concerned about the outcomes for their children. I come back to the member’s first question, which was do we believe in universal access and do we believe that they should have a quality education. I put the point to the committee that we believe that these children will get a better education through the distance education school, where we are prepared to work with them to give them extra resources to help them. Unfortunately, at the moment, we seem to have reached an impasse.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Chair, I table a show bag full of letters where hundreds of parents and students are supporting keeping their school open. Minister, what consultation did you do before you made the decision to axe their school?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I have already mentioned, there were a number of decisions that were made and the travelling show school was among a raft of savings measures that had to be decided and discussed by my department in consultation with me. There were many other stakeholders who I rang on that day of the budget—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am talking about the travelling show school.

Mr LANGBROEK: Including the travelling show school. I am happy to speak about the travelling show school specifically.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Before you closed it, what consultation did you do?

Mr LANGBROEK: Of course, we have consultation that looks at the outcomes. We are not just looking at the bottom line to the budget, but the important thing was, given that the honourable member asked the first question about do we believe that children should have access to a quality education, in this case, while we had something that had been established some years ago with federal government support, which no longer exists, it was determined by my department and in conjunction with me and the advice that I have been given that, without the important need for us—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are the state education minister—

Mr LANGBROEK: To focus on front-line services and providing the quality education for everybody that we could—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is a state responsibility, not Commonwealth, Minister—state responsibility.

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam chair, I am honestly attempting to answer the question, as I said, at the beginning. I think it is very important to note that, as I said, this was one of the many decisions that we made. The travelling show school was one of the organisations who we contacted on the day of the budget to advise them of what was happening, that we also were prepared to offer them a very good alternative in terms of education for their children where they will be able to attend at a greater attendance rate than they currently do and, most importantly, achieve better in things like the NAPLAN results than they currently are doing.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just following on from that where you said that the consultation occurred on the day when you contacted them, are you aware that, under the Education (General Provisions) Act part 3, titled 'Amalgamation or closure of State schools' section 19 states in relation to consultation—

... before closing a State school, there must be adequate consultation by the Minister with each of the following—

- (a) the school community.

Why did you not follow your own act and consult with them before you closed their school?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, can I thank the honourable member for the question and, once again, I have pointed out the cabinet process—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, no, this is under your act that you are the minister for, that you administer. It is legislation that must be followed.

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, I am sure that all legal process has been followed. I am sure that it has—

Ms PALASZCZUK: It has not.

Mr LANGBROEK: I also mention the processes that were followed. We had a cabinet decision followed by advice on the day and, once again, I am going to disagree with the honourable member. It was not consultation; it was an advice on the day. Of course, these are classes that are due to commence in 2013. So that means that the appropriate time frame has been allowed for advice that this school service would no longer be provided but, most importantly, because we are concerned about the outcomes for these children, many of whom are not from Queensland anyway—and let us have a look at the statistics; I think it is about 48 to 50 children. That is who we are actually speaking about here, at a cost \$1.5 million. So that is \$30,000 a head that we are providing these services when we are prepared to offer an alternative service through the school of distance education with support individually and collectively for all of them. So, as I say again in answer to the question, these are for classes in 2013 and I am sure all process has been followed.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Again, I refer to part 3 of the act titled 'Amalgamation or closure of State schools'. Section 18, titled 'Notice of proposed closure or amalgamation' states—

If the Minister proposes closing a State school or amalgamating 2 or more State schools, the Minister must publish a notice about the proposal in the gazette.

Minister, can you please table that notice of the gazette?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, we have the honourable member making an assertion and seeking to follow up that assertion with a request as a consequence of the assertion. I am afraid I am not going to accept that. I am confident that all process has been followed. I am going to invite the director-general to make a comment in a moment but, really, we need to get back to the crux of this issue. The crux of the issue is that the travelling show school was one of the many organisations, when we said as a government that we were going to focus on the front line, that it was important that there were certain areas where we could look at efficiencies and savings that meant that we could then focus on the front line, being classroom teachers in our schools. That meant that if we could find an alternative provision of services—and in this case one where we believe that the services that are being provided were not leading to the best outcomes for the children involved—therefore, we could find this as something that would be an alternative and, therefore, a saving. That is exactly what we did. We have done it with a group of other stakeholders, all of whom were contacted or attempted to be contacted on or around budget day. I am going to invite the director-general to speak specifically to this issue or this assertion that the honourable member is making.

Ms Grantham: As to the matter of the gazette, the school closure has not been gazetted at this time but will be gazetted prior to the closure of the 2012 school year and prior to the commencement of the 2013 school year. In terms of the education provision, 19 of the children are Queensland residents. The remaining are residents of either Victoria or New South Wales. When the children were in Victoria last week or the week before, up to 10 children left the school to attend local Victorian schools. Queensland continued to pay for the education for those students whilst then the home state was contributing as well.

In terms of distance education, there is an outstanding program run through the schools of distance education right throughout Queensland. We have offered to the children who are enrolled in the Queensland travelling show school access to this education opportunity. We have thousands of children right across Queensland who very successfully demonstrate year in and year out outstanding results as a result of their education through the school of distance education. They also can attend school at various points when they are close by. They can attend the school of distance education for extracurricular activities. So it is not just online; it is now face to face—a number of contact sessions every week where students can interact with their teacher, they can interact with others online but also with others who are in their own classroom. So the school of distance education is a very different beast from what it was that people perceive it when we talk about it. Unless you have actually been there, seen it, been in a class with the teacher, it is a very different from what is perceived to be a classroom in a distance education setting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is right. I met with the children out there who have now gone on to university education. So I think those success rates speak for themselves of when they have gone through the travelling school show and they are now going on to further education.

Ms Grantham: Children from distance education go through to university as well.

Ms PALASZCZUK: In a meeting with school representatives on 27 September, does the minister recall advising those present that their children should be able to access school of distance education lessons if all their children were gathered together under one tent on the site of any particular show?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, the opposition leader—the member of the committee—is asking me a question about something that we had discussions in this—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Gathering under a tent.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am just not going to refer to all the details of the conversation. I will say that I do not recall all the details but, of course, these parents were seeking some more information and, in fact, refusing to accept the decision that had been made. I am going to come back to the crux of the issue, which is, we believe, when I have been to some of the other distance education schools—there are seven of them around Queensland and the first visit I made as minister was to the school of distance education at Coorparoo and I have met with the principal for the one at Longreach. As the director-general has said, this is resistance from a group of parents who are so far unable to accept that they will be able to achieve good outcomes from something that we believe will provide them with better outcomes than they currently are getting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: With all due respect, you may have gone to visit the school of the air at Longreach, as I have, but you have not gone out to visit the travelling show school, to see the way they educate their students. Can the minister guarantee that travelling show families would have access to post offices along the show circuit to receive school of distance education materials, especially given that show days usually coincide with public holidays?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, can I thank the honourable member for the question. I am happy to say that we have been determined to work with this group of parents. When we speak about an issue such as this—which is one that, of course, we are determined to make sure that, just as these parents are travelling, as other parents are, we will make every arrangement to make sure that they can get their mail, as I have seen when I have been to Coorparoo. I will ask the director-general if there is something that she can add here.

Ms Grantham: The materials from the school of distance education come in a range of forms. Whereas previously it was a postal service; it no longer is a postal service. Students can still access the post office receipt of material, but they can prearrange that. But they do not need to. We also provide all students with every lesson. We can provide the parents with the home tutor material. They are online through a stick. So they can take it around so they do not need internet access if that becomes an issue during their travels. But they can also, when they do have internet access, access the material online. So it is no longer about just a postal service. We have two other mechanisms other than the post that can complement the students' access to the materials and there is no need to rely on the written material.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So, Minister, you have basically confirmed that you did no consultation beforehand. It seems that you have had limited meetings. You are not prepared to discuss what happened at those meetings. And now you are saying that distance education is the answer when these children are not in a permanent location. They are travelling around from show to show to show around regional Queensland. How can you guarantee that they will receive these educational materials? I do not think you can do that.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am going to ignore the inferences and imputations in that question, which I think are outside the standing orders, and say that we want these children to achieve to the best of their ability and potential. At the start of this group of questions the honourable member asked me a question about universal access and about quality education. I can confirm that our commitment is to these children receiving access and a quality education that will lead to them having a better life. We believe that this decision that has been considered—

Ms PALASZCZUK: With no consultation.

Mr LANGBROEK: Allowing for the outcomes, making sure that we have a strong alternative—and this has been explained by the director-general and me—will lead to better outcomes for their children. That is really what this government is all about—not about short-term media headlines, not about grandstanding for nearly half an hour on an issue that is worth \$1.5 million out of a \$9 million budget. I just exhort the honourable member that if we are going to continue in this frame all day, we are not going to get across many issues. It will be very disappointing for the committee members, who I know are interested in pursuing many other issues, given that we have made the commitment to the parents of the children of the travelling show school that we want better outcomes for their children than they—the parents—have said that they were able to achieve themselves. We have made the

commitment to improve the system of distance education. We have made the commitment to work with them individually to make sure that they are not disenfranchised. Unfortunately, the honourable member does not seem to grasp that or is willing to accept it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think you have summed it up: \$1.5 million out of a \$9 billion budget.

Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing about that is that that is exactly how the previous Labor government worked and that is how we found ourselves in the fiscal position we did with an \$85 billion debt and no prospect out of it and the prospect of having our ratings downgraded as a result: simply because this honourable member, who was a minister in a previous government, was unable to manage not just her portfolio but, of course, had a close colleague in this portfolio where basically budget issues were not ones that were of great consideration at all. This government, the Newman government, will not be taking that attitude, whether it is \$1, \$1.5 million or \$9 billion.

Mr BENNETT: Our children are the most vulnerable Queenslanders. Can you inform us what is being done to help protect them from abuse and sexual assault?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Whether it is educational outcomes or terrible issues such as abuse and sexual assault, we want to protect our children to make sure that they can have those educational outcomes. We want to make sure that we can prevent reasonably foreseeable harm. We know that staff are required to undertake student protection training when commencing employment at a state school. The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 was amended in November 2011 to extend the previous mandatory requirements regarding the reporting of sexual abuse by placing a legislative obligation on state and non-state school staff to report their concerns that a student has been sexually abused by any person, not just by an employee of the school.

In addition, the department's student protection procedure requires all state school staff to report harm or suspected harm of a child to the principal before being referred on to appropriate authorities such as the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and/or Queensland Police. If the suspected harm or risk of harm concerns an employee, principals must also report this to the department's ethical standards unit. The government has also supported partnership with the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to deliver an online child safety curriculum to students in Queensland state and non-state schools. The curriculum aims to align with the government's intention of ensuring children have knowledge of how to protect themselves and to report suspected sexual assault and child abuse. The development of the curriculum is being guided by a high-level working group, including the child safety ambassadors for Queensland, Bruce and Denise Morcombe. I had the pleasure of attending the launch of this particular activity and campaign in Barcaldine a couple of months ago. I visited Longreach as well. It was very interesting to see Bruce and Denise Morcombe who are travelling around the state. The program aims to teach children about personal safety and awareness, including cyber safety and telephone safety. It is developed using evidence based research to align with the principles of best practice in child safety education. The Daniel Morcombe Child Safety Curriculum was launched in August 2012 with the release of the early years phase.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, what additional resources have been provided to aid with the transition of year 7 into high school?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Director-General will confirm that this is one of the first questions that I asked on becoming the minister as it is such a significant change. The transitioning of our year 7s into high school is called Flying Start. One of the things that we are doing, of course, as the honourable member has mentioned, is establishing year 7 as the first year of high school from 2015. In opposition the government promised to provide better infrastructure and better planning for both the state and non-state sectors. We committed to the Building Our Future Schools Fund. The total funding is \$115 million which will be provided over four years—\$28.75 million for the state sector and \$86.25 million for the non-state sector. Can I point out to the committee that Queensland funds the non-state sector the most of any state in the country for capital. I think that is a significant commitment once again for all children in Queensland but especially those in the non-state sector.

The funding that is being provided, the \$115 million, is included as part of the department's capital funding of \$328.4 million provided for schooling infrastructure in 2012-13. That is the total education capital works program less expenses. The funds will be prioritised towards the implementation of the year 7 to secondary transition in 2015. I have been to see a number of these projects. Southport State High School is getting a significant building. Murrumba State Secondary College is one of the trial schools for Flying Start. I was there earlier this year. That is where we see year 7s and 8s together. Independent and Catholic schools are also being supported to provide refurbished and new learning facilities and student accommodation. There are a number of projects that are all there in the budget papers.

Mr LATTER: I note previous statements that you have made with regard to providing more autonomy to schools and I ask: why is it important that schools be given more autonomy and how is the government achieving this?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and point out to the committee that one of the most salient statistics that I have learnt in my time as minister, and I will ask the Director-General to put her own perspectives on this at the end of my answer, is the importance of parents, teachers and the leadership of the school. Basically it comes down to a statistic that is 50, 40, 10: 50 per cent parents, 40 per cent teachers and 10 per cent school leadership.

In answer to the member's question, if we want schools to have more autonomy we think that it is important that parents and the community be involved. What we have said is that IPS schools— independent public schools—will have greater freedom to shape their own strategic direction and to make decisions that will directly benefit their students. They will have to the ability to work directly with local businesses, industry and community organisations—that is the 50 per cent that I was speaking about in the 50, 40, 10 mix. They will have a new way of working that can lead to unique and innovative partnerships and sponsorships, providing extra support for students, schools and the local community. By using local expertise and having more freedom to respond to local community needs, independent public schools will be able to embrace innovation to maximise student learning outcomes. IPS schools will have increased autonomy to work in new ways with local businesses, industry and community organisations. This could lead to creative models of sponsorship, industry partnerships and infrastructure partnerships. They will also have increased flexibility to approve curriculum offerings that suit the needs of their students. That is something that our government is very proud of: a connection with community where we say that these principals know their communities better and that, therefore, if they want to offer the International Baccalaureate program, extracurricular programs, gateway programs and/or centres of excellence, that is something that should be encouraged.

On the day that we launched this initiative, the principal of Smithfield State High School, an independent public school, pointed out to me they have a strong connection with the local university so that they can encourage their students to be university prepared, but also a special partnership with the local chamber of commerce so that they can shape the workforce to meet the strategic directions that have been set at a local level that respond directly to the needs of their students.

We have promised 120 independent public schools to be rolled out across the state over the next four years. The government will provide a one-off \$50,000 grant to assist schools transition to becoming an IPS and the establishment of their school council. Ongoing funding will be available each year to cover administration costs. I know they did not ask this question, but I can advise the committee and the honourable member for Lytton that the Darling Point Special School in Lytton is one of the 26 independent public schools. This is something that we want to be at primary and secondary schools; we want them to be regional and remote, and including schools like the special school at Lytton is something that will benefit from this. I would invite the Director-General to add something to that if she wishes.

Ms Grantham: I think all members of the committee would recognise that our highest demand and strongest performing schools are schools that have strong community engagement. That is what independent public schools are all about. It is the principal and the school staff working with the community to ensure that the outcomes for children in those schools are the best that we can make them. Some of the examples that we already see happening where innovation happens at the school level include our sports excellence schools, the schools that specialise in language and that specialise in the creative arts. Some schools specialise in the International Baccalaureate. It is about empowering schools to work with their community to say what is best for their students and not to have to worry about getting the authority to proceed in that way from someone who is in a central or a regional office. What we are trying to say to school communities is you own your school, your school should be a centre and a hub of community activity and it is this sort of empowerment that we are trying to give to local communities to say you can do great work with your community and we will support you in doing that.

Mr PUCCI: Good morning, Minister, I refer to page 4 of the SDS and the additional resources for prep classes. Can you please inform the committee of additional resources being provided to our prep classes?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is also another significant issue. I was at the United Voice teacher aide conference on Saturday at which there was significant acknowledgement of the promise that was made by us in opposition that there should be more prep teacher aides for our children. Research shows that the more we can do with our children the younger they are, the better they will benefit. The promise is one of up to \$54 million over four years from 2012-13 for the equivalent of a full-time teacher aide in the classroom during school hours to 150 prep classes each year for the next four years. The total program will enable the equivalent of a full-time teacher aide in 600 Queensland state school classes over the next four years.

It is a significant commitment. As I have already said, it gives our prep children the best start to their education. It supports front-line teachers in doing what they do best. Once again I advise the committee that we have nearly 15,000 teacher aides in Queensland and it is great to be able to support them and to have added to their number via this promise. We know that through our teacher aides students will get more personalised attention. That will allow our children to grow their reading, writing and social skills at what is such a formative time in their development. We made this announcement at

Tullawong State School with the Premier in the early days of the government as part of our first 100 days of government promise. We announced the first 154 classes in 107 schools across the state to benefit from this commitment. As I have said, it will provide 2,341 additional teacher aide hours a week in the 2013 school year, building over the following three years to 9,000 extra hours a week across the state allowing more full-time aides working 25 hours a week. The prep enrolments at the start of the 2013 school year will determine the exact allocation of teacher aide hours to the selected schools.

On Teacher Aide Day a few weeks ago I was at Townsville Central State School where I was able to give awards to eight teacher aides. I saw the great affection in which they are held by their students and, of course, by the principal and the teachers who really appreciate the support the teacher aides give. For the benefit of newer members of the committee, the Director-General has served as a principal in a lot of large schools and, of course, is well-known as an educator. The parameters on which we chose the 150 classes are important. The Director-General might wish to expand on the mix of rural, regional and also socioeconomic characteristics.

Ms Grantham: Minister, you are correct. What we did was make sure that we looked at the schools that are in the areas of need. We looked at low SES areas—low socioeconomic standing areas—to ensure that we are working from the classrooms that had the most need for additional teacher aide time. And, of course, we worked with school principals to ensure that this allocation is quarantined to the prep years so that we know that the objective of the government in supporting younger students full-time in these prep years will be achieved.

Mr SYMES: Minister, what resources are provided to assist the literacy and numeracy of students in early years?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I also want to assure the committee that the government is committed to making Queensland one of the leading states for literacy and numeracy. As the member for Inala asked in her first question today, I will come back to what it is we are trying to provide in education in Queensland as well as access. As I keep saying to the committee, the government is committed to outcomes. We know that literacy and numeracy are things that have to be a top priority in our education system. We want to improve our NAPLAN results, not so that we can say anything other than that we know that our children are getting better outcomes as a result of their results, not because of any league table or any of the absolute focus on data that we see from so many people.

We want to ensure that our children are as literate and numerate as they can be, as early as possible. To that end, we have committed up to \$26 million over four years to give principals more choice to select tailored literacy and numeracy programs that are matched to the needs of their students. An optional suite of diagnostic tools for literacy and numeracy in the early phase of learning, prep to year 2, will be trialled from term 4, 2012 and in 2012-13, \$5,762,000 has been allocated to state schools.

Once again, it is about getting the best start. In fact, Madam Chair can confirm that in our early years in opposition these particular services were provided for in the portfolio for which she was responsible as the shadow minister for communities. Many of these early childhood services were not contained within the education department. Now, of course, we think it is very important to make sure that they are all together so that we do not have kindergarten, long-day-care services and day-care services contained in the communities department. They have been brought into the education, training and employment field. Exactly as I said in my opening statement, we do not want siloed departments and siloed sections that say 'It doesn't matter what you achieve in kindergarten, because we will deal with it in school'. We now know that there should be a seamless process from kindergartens and day-care services, including the literacy and numeracy services, all the way through school and then, of course, we will speak about training and employment later as well. Director-General, I would invite you to comment about some of the specifics of these literacy and numeracy courses.

Ms Grantham: One of the things that is really important that the minister referred to is research. Another important piece of research is the statistic of children reaching minimum reading ages by the end of year 3. That is a real indicator for future success. Schools and the department welcome this additional resource, because it means that we can give children greater support to ensure that, as they reach year 3 and then enter into their middle school phase or their upper primary phase, they have been given a great start as their literacy and numeracy levels have reached a point where they have built a solid platform on which to grow their education, enabling them to participate more fully in an education program.

CHAIR: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS. How will Queensland students celebrate the Anzac Centenary?

Mr LANGBROEK: Of course, Anzac Day is the day that many Australians regard as our pre-eminent public holiday, simply because of its significance. The tradition of respecting the sacrifice of our forefathers must be passed down through the coming generations. Once again, this is a commitment of the Newman government in opposition. In opposition we promised an Anzac prize that will give 50 Queensland high school students a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience the Anzac tradition first hand.

I can advise the committee that delegations of five Queensland high school students will tour Gallipoli and the Western Front in 2013 and 2014, culminating in a major delegation of 40 students to travel to attend the 2015 centenary commemorations. The program was opened to all eligible year 8 to 12 Queensland high school students, including those registered for home schooling. The students were required to submit a short multimedia presentation covering questions such as, why is the remembrance of Anzac important to Australians, how has the event shaped our nation and why is it still relevant and respected by our younger generations.

Applications closed a couple of weeks ago on 21 September 2012. A total of 36 student applications and 47 chaperone applications were received. The applications are being pre-assessed and shortlisted by the evaluation committee, which consists of members from the Queensland History Teachers Association, the university sector, Independent Schools Queensland and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission. A selection panel has been formed to interview shortlisted applicants. The panel includes an Anzac descendant and a serving member of the Australian Defence Force. The winners will be announced by the end of the 2012 school year. Later today, I will meet with the panel on the Speaker's Green inside the parliamentary precinct.

I look forward to making sure that more and more focus is given to the fact that the Anzac Centenary is coming up. We have seen how the day has grown in terms of community participation over the past number of years and, of course, there is no reason why our young students should not be part of the celebrations as well over the next three years.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. This brings to the end this group of government questions. I now call the member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Chair. I have a final question on the travelling show school. You mentioned that the school was closing next year. Under the act, it must be gazetted and the gazettal must take place six months before the closure of the school. Seeing that we are now in October, Minister, how are you going to meet this six-month requirement?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am confident and I will make sure that all legal processes that need to be carried out will be carried out. We will do everything we can, as I have said a number of times, to work with the parents of the travelling show school. We want to make arrangements for them to make sure their children's education progresses in 2013. I invite the director-general to add comments to that, because, as I say, it is imperative that the legal process is carried out correctly. I know it will be. I ask the director-general to comment.

Ms Grantham: I will come back to the committee with further advice. I will seek seek that from my department now.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. I refer to question on notice No. 10, tabled as a response of the estimates process. Can you confirm that 1,140 full-time positions have been axed from your department as part of the LNP budget?

Mr LANGBROEK: As I did in my opening address, I am happy to go through the detail that we have 67,000 full-time equivalent employees in our department, about 95 per cent work in schools and TAFEs, and the remainder work in central and regional offices. As I said, as part of the fiscal repair strategy the department was required to review its workforce and program allocations to assist in getting the state's finances back on track. We reviewed non-front-line vacant positions that were funded but not filled across the department.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Is 1,140 the total, full time?

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, but it is very important to understand that it is 1,140 positions but not people. We had 405 voluntary redundancies. We looked at temporary positions that were there, we had positions that were not filled and then we had these other positions as well. We ended up having a head count of 405 voluntary redundancies.

Ms PALASZCZUK: How many actual positions are there? How many people make up the 1,140 actual jobs?

Mr LANGBROEK: The head count of people who have separated for termination reasons since 26 March is 620, there were 405 voluntary redundancies and the others were temporary.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I refer back to that same answer. Ms Grantham, can you please confirm that a TCH is a teacher?

Ms Grantham: Yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Premier said there would be no cuts to front-line services, yet this answer to the question on notice shows that over 40 teacher positions have gone. Can you please explain to the committee why those teachers have gone when the Premier has said no front-line services will be axed?

Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing to consider here—and we will certainly look at this answer—is that we are speaking about teachers who hold front-line positions. We made sure that with our front-line staff, classroom teaching is the priority. We had teachers in other positions throughout

other departments and organisations whom we have asked to go back to the classroom. That means that we are increasing the total number of teachers in our schools by 270 in the budget papers. Some teachers who were in positions that were not front-line classroom teaching positions have been asked to go back to those positions. People in teaching positions with the Chief Scientist, the Queensland Museum and various arts agencies are now going back to the front line. That includes people such as the teachers of the travelling show school. Those teachers have not been terminated; we are asking them to go back into the classroom. As for the detail on the question on notice, once again I hand over to the director-general.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am sorry, Minister: a teacher at the travelling show school is not a teacher?

Mr LANGBROEK: No, I said that sometimes when we have had—

Ms PALASZCZUK: They are teaching children; isn't that front line?

Mr LANGBROEK: It is front line, but the important thing is—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You are axing it, so it is a front-line service that is going.

Mr LANGBROEK: We are making sure that they will remain at the front line as a teacher. They will be in a different front-line position as a teacher. You have asked specifically about this question on notice and I invite the director-general to answer.

Ms Grantham: The teachers at the travelling show school will be transferred, just as we transfer teachers between schools every year. It is a location change. Those teachers will remain in front-line positions. Just to clarify, the minister gave the correct answer as to where teachers can be located and where they will be transferred to. It could also refer to TAFE teachers. Some of that could be because a course has no enrolments and no students and, therefore, the teacher has no workload in a TAFE. That happens all the time and it not anything to do with a normal budget change as we have seen this year.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Director-General, would you mind providing to me a breakdown of those teaching positions, what they actually are?

Ms Grantham: Yes, I can get that for you.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Chair, the director-general has agreed to do that.

CHAIR: I would remind the member for Inala that only the minister can agree to do that.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to take that on notice.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Minister. Minister, earlier you touched on the School of the Air. Can you guarantee to the estimates committee that there will be no funding cuts to the School of the Air?

Mr LANGBROEK: Distance education is something that this government is strongly committed to. This morning we have spent considerable time discussing how much support we have given to it. In fact, as I was reading my briefs in the lead-up to this committee hearing, I noticed that we have had significant extra resources put into the School of Distance Education, as much as anything this year because of the significant curriculum resources that needed to be added through the work that is being done with the Australian curriculum. We know that thousands of students take advantage of the provision of distance education. We are committed to the service. We are always looking for ways, of course, to make sure that we allow for technological advancement and we may not always do things the same way as we have done in the past. However, we give that commitment because we know that Queensland is such a decentralised state and the service is provided to and used by parents from all different walks of life. It is important that we continue to support the School of Distance Education. We will continue to do that.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Can you guarantee that there will be no funding cuts and no centralisation of the School of the Air?

Mr LANGBROEK: Whether it is the School of Distance Education or other schooling sectors, we will constantly review how we are providing services. If there are specific details that the honourable member would like to ask me about, I am happy to provide some more detail. It is important that I also ask the director-general to expand on some of the particular issues that are happening in the schools of distance education. I invite her to do so now.

Ms Grantham: The schools of distance education work collaboratively across each institute that is located throughout Queensland. Our schools of distance education principals are starting to take a lead in different areas of particular curriculum. Some might be leading the development of the curriculum materials, as is the Brisbane School of Distance Education. Some are taking a lead on supporting students with disabilities. They are sharing the workload and working cooperatively, so that they maximise what can happen for the students enrolled in their schools. They work very cleverly together to make sure that what they are doing is efficient. We have looked at their resourcing over time and that is something that we continue to do, although not with the intention of diminishing that in any way. We are ensuring that what they have available to develop the curriculum materials has actually

been enhanced. As the minister said, the demand of the Australian curriculum implementation this year has a particular emphasis on material development for students in distance education, because of their particular circumstances. It is how they work together. They are working very cooperatively, taking lead and making sure that the strength of the distance education system is enhanced through their work.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Just to clarify, there will be no cuts to staff or the locations of the school of the air?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes or no?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to thank the honourable member for the question. I would also like to point out to her that I think there are more standing orders about questions than there are about answers. When she demands of me to answer something in the affirmative or the negative, I would ask her to consult the standing orders about how I can choose to answer the question.

All I will say about the School of Distance Education is that we will always look at reviewing the way we provide services. If there are different ways of doing things we would encourage those seven schools to come together, under their principal Neil McDonald who is at Coorparoo and is the principal of a very vibrant services, and consider those. As we have seen by the change from the previous government to this government, there are different ways of doing things—and the Newman government acknowledges that. If we can find ways to do things that allow for technological improvement and ways to do things that deliver better services then we will certainly investigate them.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you are conducting a review of the school of the air?

Mr LANGBROEK: I will not confirm that for the honourable member. What I can say is that we will always look at different ways to do everything in my portfolio that could lead to better outcomes. The previous government were not prepared to do that or they would always be held hostage to significant media campaigns or upcoming elections. We are not going to do things like that. We are looking at how we do things, how we provide services and whether we are getting good value for taxpayers' money, and that is what we are going to keep doing. That is the case whether it is the School of Distance Education or any other facet of my department.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, I now refer to some \$4 million in cuts to community education programs. I ask the minister what consultation occurred with the Pyjama Foundation? Can you outline to the committee what work the Pyjama Foundation did?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the member for the question. This of course goes to the heart of the question relating to the travelling show school. A number of community organisations and government agencies were receiving funding from my department that totalled some millions of dollars. On the day of the budget I personally made calls to 20 to 30 organisations advising them of the fact that they were losing teachers who had been seconded to their agencies or to their community organisations. We acknowledged the great work that many of those organisations did, but in the current budgetary circumstances—and I am happy to go through those circumstances for the honourable member, but I would hope that she would be aware of them having left those circumstances for us as a government—we had to look at everything we were doing as a government.

We were in a situation where we had a budget deficit that totalled some billions of dollars—\$3 billion to \$4 billion—each year for the next three or four years, plus a debt that will approach \$85 billion. Because of that, I was tasked by the Budget Cabinet Review Committee to make sure that I could find some savings. The Pyjama Foundation was one of those organisations that I made the call to on the day of the budget to advise them that we were unable to continue the funding that we had provided up to now. We gave them notice of the fact that whilst we valued the programs they were providing they were not things that we could keep providing in the current circumstances. We advised that we wanted to work with them to find innovative solutions, as we have for other aspects in my portfolio and my department where we have decided to cease funding. As a department we want to come together with them to work on finding some other arrangement. The director-general might like to expand on that given the raft of organisations we considered. I invite her to make a comment now.

Ms Grantham: The Pyjama Foundation was funded for \$100,000. As the minister said in his opening statement, in cutting that program it was not about the quality of the program or the outcomes of the program, it was about how we ensure that the Education budget enables us to retain class sizes and deliver on the priorities of the government for school education. In doing so, we needed to look at a range of other programs that were being funded that did not directly impact on classrooms. Those decisions had to be made. Organisations were notified that, following these decisions, funding would not continue in 2013.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My question also was: what work does the Pyjama Foundation do?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I actually had a discussion with them on the day about the work they do and acknowledged the great work they do in working with young people.

Ms PALASZCZUK: What sort of work do they do?

Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing is that we acknowledged the work that they do. They do work with young people—

Ms PALASZCZUK: But what work do they do?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not going to sit here and talk about everything that everyone does in all of those organisations. I had advice that it was something that we could not continue. We know that they do lots of work with kids with reading in the early stages. It is something that we value. Unfortunately, it was something that we could not continue to keep funding to the level that we have been because of our focus on our class size targets and making sure that we have more teachers in our classrooms. That is what we have done with this year's budget.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The Pyjama Foundation provides support to children in foster care. I move on to the cuts to the Ready Readers Book for Bubs Program. It is a fact that one-third of Queensland children are not regularly read to at home and Queensland children are behind the rest of the country in this regard. Can you explain why you have cut the Ready Readers Book for Bubs Program and can you explain what the program did?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Once again, it is another one of the measures that we discontinued that will save us about \$133,000 in program expenses. We said that we wanted to ease the cost-of-living pressures for Queenslanders and to refocus the resources on front-line services. So we took the decision to cancel the Ready Readers Book for Bubs Program. There is no doubt that this was a program that was brought in at the former Premier's behest. We of course want our children to achieve quality educational outcomes. It actually did not have a funding source. The important thing was that it was more money that the government had to find so that the former Premier could have a good media opportunity.

We of course want parents to read to their children to develop their literacy skills from an early age, but do we think that the former Premier going into a hospital and giving books to parents and saying, 'We want you to start reading to your children,' is the way we should do it? No, we decided that we were not going to do it. It was one of the first things that we cut when it was provided to me as an example of something that was not properly funded but had clearly been used as an attempt to try to get the Labor Party re-elected at the last election.

We have parent ready reader training available in all regions, providing parents of children in prep to year 3 with some key strategies to support their child's reading. I can advise the honourable member that when my wife was in hospital having our three children she was not sitting their reading books to our babies and saying, 'This will turn you into a reader.' It was important that we did it, and we did do it as soon as the children were able to, but she had other priorities on her mind other than reading a book that had been given to her by a Premier of Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I move on to the PPP program. You are cutting \$291,000 from the PPP program? Can you explain to the committee what the PPP program is and in the past what the \$291,000 had been allocated for?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am interested in the member's constant focus on whether I know what programs are. The important thing is that we focus on what it is that we are trying to achieve. We look at all of these programs in isolation to see what it is they are providing and the resources we are giving to the particular agencies that are delivering these programs and then how we are going to make sure that we keep providing similar services if we are unable to keep supporting them, as with the Ready Readers Book for Bubs Program.

There was a service agreement for the PPP. It was a tripartite service agreement that had been established between Queensland Health and PPP International. There was a standing offer rate for the purchase of PPP training courses. The terms of the agreement required the department to purchase a minimum of four training courses per year. The current service agreement to purchase PPP provider training courses ceases on 27 November 2012. I can advise the committee that over time the demand for training has reduced. As such, the department is not seeking to renew the agreement at this time.

Under the existing agreement the department's priority has been to provide training for the staff of non-government early years services funded by the department. In the first two years of the agreement a good proportion of training participants were from this target group. But over time, however, the demand for training from this group significantly reduced. Given the low demand for the training, the department is not seeking to negotiate a new agreement.

That ties in with my statement a little while ago that we did not just say in a cold hard way, 'We are just going to stop these programs.' We obviously looked at what they do and how we are going provide alternatives. We then looked at the financial aspects to all these contracts and that is what we make no apologies for doing.

CHAIR: I now call on the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: Can you please explain the scope and purpose of the review into the Grammar Schools Act?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Grammar Schools Act is another one of the issues that we have mentioned as part of our six-month plan for following the first 100 days of the Newman government. There are eight grammar schools with over 8,750 enrolments. The Grammar Schools of Queensland Association came to me to speak about some of the current arrangements that they have to carry out as part of their responsibilities. They asked us to look at this as part of our look at red tape, which is something that the government has promised to reduce by 20 per cent over the next six years.

This is a little aberration we have seen in Queensland when they were set up in the 1860s. The communities could put in a certain amount of money and then the government was prepared to match it. We ended up with eight grammar schools with their statutory bodies established under the Grammar Schools Act 1975. They have obligations but they also have benefits that do not apply to other schools because they are statutory bodies.

Having said that, we have committed to reviewing the act. We think it is important when we are looking at regulations that affect so many different areas. There are other areas we can speak about, like the non-state schools accreditation act and the QSA which we have also committed to review. The Department of Education, Training and Employment will undertake the review. Stakeholders will be consulted as part of the process. Obviously they have come to us to speak to us about the things they would like to have removed. I know they consulted with the previous government and sought review of some of the responsibilities they have, but the previous Treasurer was not prepared to consider any of those changes.

I am not flagging that we are going to allow some of the things that they want to be excused from. The important thing is that we are going to have an examination of the requirements such as financial disclosure and reporting, maintaining public records and compliance with state procurement policy. One of the things that honourable members of the committee may be aware of is that even the Auditor-General pointed out in one of his reports that the grammar schools need to, under accounting rules, put some of the details of remuneration of some of their senior staff in their annual reports. It is something with which they have had a bit of disagreement with the Auditor-General based on their advice. The Auditor-General's perspective is that, under accounting requirements, they should be putting this detail into their annual reports.

What we want to do is work with the grammar schools to make sure that they can operate efficiently in a framework appropriate to the contemporary quality schools landscape in Queensland. The review report will be provided to the Premier by the end of the year. I am sure the director-general has something that she would like to add to this, and I invite her to do so now.

Ms Grantham: We met with the grammar schools association. I also met with the chairs of all the grammar schools at the end of 2011. They put forward to me a range of issues they had encountered as part of their obligation as grammar schools and what is required under the Grammar School Act. For a school to adhere to some of those demands, particularly in terms of state procurement, reporting and the essential pieces that go with that, it is quite onerous. It does have an impact on them in trying to meet their obligations under the Grammar School Act and therefore the state procurement policy.

I listened very carefully to them without giving an undertaking. We will work with them as we review the Grammar School Act to ensure that their views are understood and, where possible, develop a new and more contemporary Grammar School Act that will satisfy both the government's demands and those of the grammar schools.

CHAIR: I call the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, how is the government planning for future growth of student population in Queensland?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is also another significant election promise made by us to make sure we can have a better planning process for our future schools in Queensland. Ensuring informed planning of the infrastructure needs of our schools to support enrolment growth is a key focus of my department's infrastructure program. Queensland has led the way in establishing a Schools Planning Commission to bring together relevant stakeholders to advise government on streamlining and coordinating processes for the planning of government and non-government schools.

There has been a significant issue over a number of years that honourable members will be aware of when community groups especially who may be connected with particular churches, for example, want to establish a school. What they have had to do to try to get a school up and running has been a particular frustration to many people in those sectors. The LORDs school, which is in the member for Coomera's area, is a simple example. But I know that when I met with people from some Christian schools last Friday on the Gold Coast there were significant impediments to them trying to get a school going. We said as a campaign promise that we would have a better process in establishing the Schools Planning Commission.

The commission will produce two significant pieces of work. The first is an analysis of future population trends and school capacity and their potential impact on capital funding needs of the school sectors to produce a Queensland schools infrastructure demand map—something that has not been done before. Instead of that we have just had a community of people saying, 'We have a community here and we think we need a school.' We need to do it better than that, and that is exactly what this will do. The demand map will be a living document that says, 'Here is where we see the trends going and how can we work together with the Catholic and independent sector.' Instead of us just saying, 'We're going to provide a state school,' it is about working with those sectors to make sure we get better planning for our schools. The second aspect of the commission's work will be an analysis of current school planning regulatory and financial regimes and recommendations on how best to increase efficiencies in school planning, development and capital allocation and to reduce red tape.

I can advise the committee the commission met for the first time on 28 August 2012. The three schooling sectors provided the commission with case studies of the current school infrastructure planning. So I am sure they will be able to provide some details of the frustrations for many people of the process. They were also able to provide development process details to highlight the key issues and challenges facing stakeholders, because that is something that we have committed to as a government—making sure we work with stakeholders who know their local communities and are saying, 'This is what we need from government.' So instead of government getting in the way, we are helping and assisting them so that strong foundations can be laid to develop a work plan and priorities for 2012-13.

The commission also commenced development of a schools infrastructure demand map. So the demand map itself was commenced by establishing a subgroup of experts to investigate available data and potential ways of sharing information. Director-General, is there anything you would like to add?

Ms Grantham: Other than the physical resources that are required as student population increases, one of the other areas that we need to do work on of course is staffing. As students increase by 25 to 28 students obviously new teaching staff are appointed. Therefore, we work in our human resource area with universities on supply and demand for teachers particularly in the areas where we have teacher shortages. So we try to make sure that we are planning ahead as well for beginning teachers to be appointed into areas where we do experience significant student population growth. It is about the physical resources and making sure they are well planned. But it is also about the human resource that drives our department to ensure that the students in our schools are getting a great education.

CHAIR: I call the member for Waterford.

Mr LATTER: Minister, I draw to your attention and acknowledge some of the great work that is happening in our schools regarding special needs, not least of which Waterford State School. My question to you minister is: how is the government assisting children with special needs through the use of technology?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and confirm that the Newman government is committed to ensuring that all of our students are appropriately supported to achieve positive educational outcomes. Once again this is another election promise that we are proud to deliver on, and that is to make sure that our student support services that are allocated to the regions and schools may include specialist teachers, speech language therapy services, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, guidance support, behaviour support, learning support, nursing services, teacher aides, as well as access to assistive technology, alternative format materials and special provisions for assessment.

I can advise the committee that I have been to the DS unit on the south side of Brisbane and have seen the work they do, where they are looking at new and different equipment, specialised equipment for people with special needs. We have a budget for students with disabilities in state schools of approximately \$771 million for 2012-13. In recognising the support needs of our special needs students, the government has committed to 30 additional full-time equivalent speech and language pathologists at a cost of \$10.9 million over four years for state and non-state schools. In addition, \$3.5 million is committed to providing 20 electronic tablets to each state special school or non-government school offering a special education program, with 10 tablets for use by the students.

By the end of this month the department will have delivered in excess of 7,300 etablets to support our students with special needs. I know how much these teachers and students are looking forward to them. As we said, sometimes these students with special needs get the same assistance from using etablets simply because of some of the great programs they are able to access. I have been to the special ed teachers conference at which I acknowledged not just their commitment to professional development but the fact that they also should be getting some of these resources that are available to the wider community and that, as government is able to, we are assisting to provide things like speech pathologists and of course etablets. Director-General?

Ms Grantham: I am sure members have been into schools where you would all have seen children who have learning difficulties or who have a disability that does impact on their learning. With regard to etablets, if you get a chance I would urge you to see how children interact with technology in spite of a disability. It is a wonderful thing to see. It is a method of communication for many children with the adaptive technologies we have in our schools. So if members have an opportunity I would urge them to go. We have a programs up and running for etablets in our schools. It is a great thing to see children really engaged in learning in different ways.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Logan.

Mr PUCCI: Minister, children get the most out of education when they get the best start to their school life. What additional resources have been given to assist children make the transition into school?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course I accept that children do get the most out of education when they get the best start to their school life. We have mentioned it a number of times this morning. The transition to school programs build positive relationships between children, families, communities, schools and educators and are associated with better adjustment in the first year of school, increased self-confidence, reduced behavioural difficulties, higher levels of social skills and academic achievement. A child's developmental and educational outcomes also derive from their learning experiences before school.

Our program, which is called Step Up into Education, provides \$4 million over four years from the 2013 school year to 2015-16 to improve children's transition to school. We will be focusing on assisting children in areas of disadvantage and encouraging parents to become involved in their child's learning journey. This is something that has also been very important since I have been minister, focusing on the 50 per cent that parents contribute to the learning outcomes. We have 40 per cent for teachers and 10 per cent for the school leadership, but it is very important that we try to get parents involved. I understand that many parents have significant issues, with both parents working or single parent families or in some cases no parents. But we want to make sure in situations where we can that parents get involved.

This program complements the government's commitment to universal access to early childhood education by 2014. Many of the kindergarten services are co-located on school sites. I know there are members here on the committee who would like to have some of these kindergarten services co-located on school sites in their own electorate. I know the member for Waterford has a particular interest in that. If parents can take their children to a kindergarten service at a school, it is going to make that transition potentially easier when the children actually go to school because they have already been going to the kindergarten there.

The proportion of Queensland children accessing the early childhood education kindergarten program has increased from 29 per cent in 2009 to 68 per cent in 2011. The commitment will smooth a child's transition from early childhood education and care to school. It makes changes in pre-kindergarten years to improve school readiness. It is evidence based, which I think is very important. It builds on information and activities that are already in place such as early learning, parenting and family support programs, supported playgroups at some schools, early year centres—one of which I saw last week in Acacia Ridge—and children and family centres.

A kindergarten transition statement is provided to the school by parents when the child commences prep. The statement summarises a child's learning, motivations, skills and strengths in an approved kindergarten program. We also have other activities such as the Parents as First Teachers program, which is funded by schools with high Indigenous enrolments on a discretionary basis. We have supported playgroups provided by schools and in other early childhood settings such as children and family centres. We also have Queensland Ready Readers and Let's Read programs, which support parents to assist their children develop early literacy skills.

So you can see there is a significant amount of resources being given by the government, but once again working with early childhood educators to make sure that we have evidence based frameworks and then using the resources we have to make sure as many parents and children as possible can get access to these services. Director-General?

Ms Grantham: We have said before today that the early years are the most important years. So that year before the formal start of schooling into prep which we call kindy is a wonderful story for Queensland. In 2009, as the minister said, the rate of engagement in kindy was 29 per cent. That did not mean children were not in long day care; it meant that they were not in a kindy program. Last year the goal was 65 per cent; we reached 68 per cent. So parents right across Queensland have really embraced the opportunity for children to be involved in a kindy program.

We describe a kindy program as a program that runs an accredited curriculum, has a qualified teacher, where children attend that program for 15 hours a week. It is a great partnership that has occurred between C&K and the government—those C&K stand-alone kindys but also new-build kindys that are on state school sites and where the independent and Catholic sectors have built on their school sites. But it is also about funding the long-day-care sector to run a kindy program by hiring a qualified teacher, because that is where we know the children are. So we have continued with that strategy.

We are all the time accrediting new long-day-care services to implement the kindy program. In fact, what we have found is that the take-up in the long-day-care sector has been so great that we have not had to build as many stand-alone facilities that were initially calculated. So this is a great opportunity for parents in Queensland and a great opportunity for children to get a really solid start before they commence formal schooling.

CHAIR: I call the member for Lytton.

Mr SYMES: Minister, why is it necessary to review the Queensland Studies Authority and the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 is 10 years old. In light of curriculum developments at both state and national levels, it needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is appropriately addressing the needs of our education system. Members of the committee are obviously aware of the significant focus on the national curriculum, but I have also had significant interest in matters that are dealt with by the Queensland Studies Authority brought to my attention, and some of those have been highlighted in the media as well. Once again we want to be responsive about that and say that, if this is a 10-year-old act, we have to review the role of the Queensland Studies Authority, schooling authorities and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. In the review we are also considering the QSA's capacity to respond to ministerial and government priorities, client needs, as I have already mentioned, and community expectations.

The QSA has been subject to previous review processes. There was a 2006 review of the QSA act by Emeritus Professor Philip Meade and the 2009 Webbe-Weller review of government bodies. The implementation of previous review findings were impacted by the emergence of ACARA, which is the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, and the Australian curriculum. So when I go to ministerial council meetings with other state ministers, along with the federal minister, we have had this national agenda that is also then being imposed on the states. Because we have these other reporting authorities, the Queensland Studies Authority has to work with those authorities. So we are reviewing the QSA and, as I have already mentioned, we are reviewing, for example, the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board as well.

The review is being overseen by a steering committee with representatives from schooling sectors and the chair of the QSA. As I have just mentioned, in regard to the regulation of non-state schools, the act and regulation are also over a decade old. Stakeholder expectations have changed in relation to the contemporary regulation of schooling. The review will consider streamlining and a simplifying accreditation and funding processes. At the moment they can get accredited to provide a non-state school but then the funding process is a separate one. So someone says, 'Yes, we agree that you can provide a non-state school type of schooling,' but then funding goes to a separate body. That is the sort of frustration that many of these organisations face; that they can get either one but not necessarily the other.

The review will also consider gaps in current provisions—for example, regulations and standards for boarding schools and international schools; reducing duplication between Commonwealth and state regulatory systems; and cutting unnecessary red tape, for example, audit processes. Once again, this comes back to the heart of what government is saying. If we are making people through compliance have to do things that someone else is asking them to do, then why should they be doing it twice with all of the extra effort that means they have to do? In early childhood it is slightly different because we have significant money coming from the federal government for those early childhood national partnerships, but in many of these areas where there is red tape and compliance and acquittal we want to try to get rid of not red tape for the sake of it but to make sure they are not doing things unnecessarily and having to replicate those.

The other things the review will consider are the unnecessary differences between the regulatory environment of state and non-state schools and technical issues with the current act that have been raised by the board. Even the board has said to me there are issues that it, as a board, acknowledges; there are aberrations within the non-state schools accreditation act that should be addressed, and for that reason we are reviewing the Queensland Studies Authority and the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

Ms Grantham: The face of the curriculum has changed significantly in the last few years. In introducing the Australian curriculum into P-10, the role of the Queensland Studies Authority has changed significantly and so that needed to be addressed through the legislation. In respect of the other part of the curriculum change, there has been development of syllabus documents for senior secondary that are out for consultation. They were developed by the Australian curriculum authority, but that is not in every subject. They have developed syllabus documents in English, maths, science and history but not in many of the other subjects traditionally taught in Queensland schools. There is not a clear understanding as to whether that will be further developed. So there is a new role for the Queensland Studies Authority—one that needs to be made contemporary and to be recognised to give them the head of power in order to do that.

As the minister said, the previous chair of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board made recommendations to us to bring about some changes. They were on hold while we considered other matters, but we are now progressing with that review. There is also some movement by the Australian government, which, as you know, is the major funder of the non-state sector, to look at consistency and some issues they have had with schools that have been accredited by the states that are operating in the independent and Catholic sectors. So lots of things are happening that lead to a timely review of those acts.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, can you please advise the committee if you met with any of the 43 organisations or program providers before you decided to cut their funding?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have already mentioned the processes of the budget which the honourable member would be aware of. Having been directed by the Cabinet Budget Review Committee to find significant savings, we asked the department to make sure that we were considering what we were going to do in terms of the effect on the front line, to make sure we focused on the things we had said during the election campaign, which was the absolute focus on the front line and classroom teachers. The second aspect of the budget process is a courtesy to explain to some of these groups on the day of the budget what was happening or soon thereafter. So there had been some meetings via members of my department, as there are constantly with many of the stakeholders—

Ms PALASZCZUK: But you never met with any of them?

Mr LANGBROEK:—and I confirm that those cuts were made with consideration given to the effects that would happen to them. But given what we had inherited it was important that we get on with the job—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sure, but which ones did you personally meet?

Mr LANGBROEK: They were difficult decisions that we made but we had considered the effects.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So you did not meet with any of them?

Mr LANGBROEK: I will confirm for the member that we made sure we called many of these people and advised them—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I know you called them personally. I understand that. But did you meet with any of them before the decision was made? Did you personally?

Mr LANGBROEK: We certainly would not meet with them given that the cabinet budget review process is a confidential one—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Okay, so you did not meet with them.

Mr LANGBROEK:—and therefore it would be completely inappropriate for a minister to be telling people about a budget decision when we know—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Or to talk to them about their programs.

Mr LANGBROEK:—that these things are confidential. It is also important to acknowledge that we meet regularly with our stakeholders—often monthly or quarterly—and that some of these budget decisions were ones that had to be made by the government in the light of the situation we found ourselves in. We are not going to say to people, ‘How are you going to feel if we cut your budget?’ But we acknowledge that we had to provide services similar to the ones being provided or there were some things that were nice to have but in the current budget situation we could not keep supporting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, how many people have lost their jobs as a result of the cuts to these 43 organisations and programs?

Mr LANGBROEK: Some of them are non-government organisations. Of course we know that there are going to be effects on some of the organisations which were either co-funded by government or funded by government entirely, and that is something that has happened, as I am sure we will discuss later on, in the training sector with Skilling Queenslanders for Work. I understand that many of these organisations which are passionate about what they do and deliver great services have employees within their organisations who, as a result of these decisions, will not be able to keep being employed.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, I am happy to take that on notice if you are happy to provide the information.

Mr LANGBROEK: I can advise the honourable member that because they are not organisations that are part of our organisation—in other words, they are not employees of the Department of Education, Training and Employment—they are not details that we keep.

Ms PALASZCZUK: But you are also the Minister for Employment. Surely you would have an idea about how many job losses there are in the non-government sector.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question, but I am not the minister for employment for everyone who is employed in the Queensland employment system. In other words, I do not have the details of every company and every person who is employed in the Queensland job market

and I cannot seriously think the honourable member would think the Minister for Employment should be able to tell her or the committee every job held by every company or every association in the state, because that is not what the Minister for Employment actually does.

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are the programs that you provided funding to. Moving on, Minister, I refer to page 14 of the financial statements attached to the 2011-12 education annual report. Why is the average replacement life for a Queensland school 80 years while the Premier is replacing his Executive Building, which is approximately half this age? Don't you consider that the priority should be on fixing schools rather than creating a brand-new Executive Building for the Premier and his ministers?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I certainly accept that the priority should be on fixing schools, because the previous Labor government did not do it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Be very careful, Minister; that is not true.

Mr LANGBROEK: They left us with a \$292 million—

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is not correct, and you could be misleading the committee.

Mr LANGBROEK: Well, it is a matter of fact that they left us with a \$292 million maintenance backlog, and for that reason given that we do not necessarily choose to replace our schools more often than—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy for the director-general to clarify your comments, Minister.

Mr LANGBROEK: The director-general will be able to answer, but the honourable member asked me a question about priorities and then made an assertion about how often we replace our schools or said that we should be doing something about maintenance in our schools. I am happy to answer that aspect of the question particularly, because that is exactly why we announced as one of the significant measures in our budget \$200 million to reduce the maintenance backlog via the Advancing Our Schools Maintenance Fund. I know that some of the other members of the committee are looking forward to asking me about some of the details. In answer to the question, there is no doubt that there was a Labor legacy of unfunded maintenance, and I am going to ask the director-general to give me the details.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You said that Labor did nothing, and that is completely incorrect and you know it.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I say to the honourable member through the chair that what I said was, and what I will say is, the amount of maintenance that was needed to be done was not funded appropriately by the former Labor government. I think they were funding us to the amount of \$80 million a year with a special one-off payment a couple of years ago, but it still left us with a maintenance legacy of about \$292 million. There were no plans. It was a significant issue that was even mentioned in the Costello Commission of Audit report. What the Treasurer has kindly done is give us a resource of \$200 million over the next couple of years to reduce the maintenance backlog. I am going to ask the director-general to address the specific details of what the maintenance backlog was so we can have it on the record for the committee that it was significantly underfunded by the former Labor government and that we are doing something about it. In fact, it is one of the hallmarks of the budget.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, you said Labor did nothing. That is what you said to this estimates hearing. That is what you said to this estimates hearing: Labor did nothing.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am going to ask the director-general to comment about the specific detail of what the maintenance backlog was.

Ms Grantham: The minister has stated the figure correctly. The maintenance backlog was \$292 million. That is actually a published figure and has been released previously. Every year QBuild does a maintenance assessment of every school in Queensland. Every school has a maintenance register that is developed by QBuild and every school then has that completely detailed and the assessment that that adds up to is about \$292 million. The department has an annual budget of \$80 million to address maintenance. Obviously the maintenance compounds—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And that maintenance money was spent under the previous Labor government of which you were the director-general?

Ms Grantham: I was, yes. It was \$80 million and last year there was an additional \$50 million to do a trial of maintenance.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So let me clarify: it was \$80 million plus an additional \$50 million?

Ms Grantham: Last year, yes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So \$130 million. The minister said that Labor did nothing, yet the director-general has just confirmed that \$130 million had been allocated for school maintenance. Minister, would you like to clarify your comments to the estimates committee?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question, and I will continue to say that Labor did nothing to address the issue at hand, which was a continual blowing out of the maintenance budget—

Ms PALASZCZUK: \$130 million last year.

Mr LANGBROEK: It was blowing out. It was heading towards being over \$450 million over the next two years. It is a figure that is there and I am happy to provide it to the member. In fact, I will provide what the figures were going to be. In other words, \$80 million was not enough. An extra \$50 million was welcomed but also was not enough, and the maintenance backlog continued to blow out under the former Labor government. I am happy to provide those details for the sake of the committee and will in fact do so.

Ms PALASZCZUK: If we can have the maintenance levels for the last three years, that would help the committee.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to provide those because—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just want to clarify: you said to this committee Labor did nothing. Your director-general has confirmed to the estimates committee that \$130 million was allocated in the last budget.

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, it is an assertion about something that is clear that Labor did nothing about to the extent to which it should have been and it was continuing to be a problem. We are addressing it. The former Labor government did not. I am happy to keep going along this line of questioning if the honourable member is saying that—

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Bundamba has a couple of questions.

Mr LANGBROEK:—giving \$80 million towards a maintenance backlog of \$292 million where the assets keep growing and you should be funding it for one per cent of depreciation was enough. It was not enough.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You said Labor did nothing.

Mr LANGBROEK: Well—

Mr LATTER: I raise a point of order, Madam Chair. I respect the member for Inala's questions but object to the continual interjections when the minister is trying to answer the question.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Waterford. I would ask the member for Inala to beware of interjecting. The minister is answering these questions.

Mrs MILLER: Chair, my question is to the minister. I refer to page 3 of the SDS and your decision to sell off the historic Blackstone State School site even though it is leased and occupied by the Ipswich Historical Society, the Ipswich Genealogical Society and the Bundamba Naval Association. I also refer to your decision to sell off the Dinmore State School site, which is occupied and leased by the Samoan Advisory Council. I ask: why do you expect the elderly and the poor, the Samoan and Pacific Islander communities and returned sailors in our community to mortgage their homes, to get into debt to buy the historic Blackstone State School site and also Dinmore State School?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and welcome her to the committee. It is important for new members of the committee to see the assertion that is being made by the member about closing this school. For those members who are new to this committee—

Mrs MILLER: Selling it off!

Mr LANGBROEK: I advise the committee that this was part of the funding model for the Labor government's election policy State Schools of Tomorrow. In other words, they built a whole lot of new schools and as part of that plan they planned to close schools—and the member for Lytton will know this as Wynnum was another case where it happened and there was also Inala. The decision to close the school was made by the previous Labor government. The school closed at the end of 2009 and students were relocated to nearby Bundamba and Silkstone state schools which were considered to be more sustainable and able to provide greater curriculum adversity. Multimillion dollar upgrades have since been carried out at the schools.

So the department is progressing with the disposal of the site in accordance with the whole-of-government land policies. Because I have seen the correspondence and have signed off on it, I understand, as I am sure the honourable member knows, that there were some community groups that were given access to these buildings for some time. Even though they are now seeking to have that tenure increased, as a new government coming in seeking to manage the books again, we have said that these are going to continue. The disposal, along with the State Schools of Tomorrow policy, was part of the plan. So that is building new schools and improving them. The resources gained from disposing of some of these properties would then go to help fund a previous government's election policy. Can I invite the director-general to add something here? The director-general would be more aware of the detail having been in the department at the time that these decisions were made.

Ms Grantham: You would all agree that some of the outcomes we have got from State Schools of Tomorrow have been wonderful additions to the community. The hard part of that was the closure of some of these schools. Schools, as we talked about earlier, want to be part of the school community.

However, in funding the State Schools of Tomorrow, part of our obligation now is actually to sell off the assets which were part of the commitment and part of that capital program. Whilst it is now having an impact on the community groups who have been using vacant sites, if we do not sell those assets we cannot actually fund the debt, or the investment, that was to build those new schools. Whilst we like community groups to be in our schools and to use our schools as part of a community facility, in this case we would have to find money elsewhere to fund that debt if we do not actually deliver on the funding mechanism that was identified in the first instance. That is the dilemma.

Mrs MILLER: Chair, I would like to table the letter in relation to the notice to vacate Blackstone State School and also—

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Bundamba, you will need to seek leave as a visiting member.

Mrs MILLER: I seek leave to table that letter.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, you were talking before about part of the State Schools of Tomorrow and it was a decision by the previous Labor government to give the Samoan Community Advisory Council as well as the Ipswich Historical Society three-year leases on these particular sites. The letter that I just tabled, in fact, breaks this lease and says that they have to be out by 1 January. Minister, I put it to you that you are being cruel, callous and cold by expecting the elderly citizens of Ipswich who run the Ipswich Genealogical Society and the Ipswich Historical Society, some of the most poor and disadvantaged people with regard to the Samoan and Pacific communities and particularly the returned naval officers who served this country to reverse mortgage their homes; you are expecting them to borrow the money to be able to purchase these properties.

CHAIR: Member for Bundamba, I would remind you that personal reflections are deemed highly disorderly.

Mrs MILLER: And so are personal reflections on people in my community who cannot afford the \$450,000 plus GST, which I understand your department has invited them to offer to purchase Blackstone State School.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and advise the committee that the Ipswich Historical Society has occupied the premises since 2009 under a licence agreement. They are required to vacate the site by January 2013. A long-term lease has not been negotiated. If other state or local government authorities are not interested in purchasing the land, it will be offered to the public for sale. The Ipswich Historical Society will have an opportunity to purchase the property as part of that process. As I understand it, the former school is not currently listed on the Queensland Heritage Register. The Ipswich City Council has recognised the historic value of the school buildings.

The closure of the school, of course, was a decision made by the previous Labor government following a community consultation process undertaken by independent consultants. I note the member for Bundamba was not prepared necessarily to stand up and oppose the previous Labor government's plans for schools in her area. I can advise—

Mrs MILLER: Minister, that is, in fact, quite wrong. I did stand up for them and we saved the school sites. Minister, I have a follow-up question. Why will you not gift these buildings to these particular organisations and sell off the remainder of the site?

Mr LANGBROEK: There we have an example for the committee of the reckless financial management—

Mrs MILLER: Nonsense!

Mr LANGBROEK:—of the former Labor government. 'Don't worry about the money. Just hand over some resources.' I can advise the committee that—

Mrs MILLER: The poor and the disadvantaged—you do not care, do you?

Mr LANGBROEK:—the Ipswich Historical Society has been invited to contact the relevant departmental officers should they wish to discuss the issue further. However, we are not about saying that, when there was a previous government that had what they considered to be a significant plan—the State Schools of Tomorrow—and part of that plan was to sell off sites—and I am sure they would have consulted with the local member because their minister was of the same political party to say, 'This is what we're doing in your area with these particular schools: Blackstone, Silkstone and other schools.' I have already mentioned the area of the former member for Lytton and of course the area of the member for Inala. In fact, I remember sitting here and in the parliament listening to the member for Inala telling us why State Schools of Tomorrow were outstanding plans. Part of those plans meant that some schools would have to be the schools that were disposed of. That is what this plan is doing—continuing that plan.

Mrs MILLER: So history means nothing?

Mr LANGBROEK: I do not remember the member for Bundamba opposing any of those plans. We are just carrying out the plans that were already part of the State Schools of Tomorrow plan. We are prepared to work with these groups. Again, we know that they would like some arrangements. No-one is suggesting that they have to do what the member for Bundamba is suggesting that they are considering doing, which is putting themselves into considerable financial hardship to do something like this. But we are not going to be giving away state assets because that is what the previous government would consider or, in fact, selling them to try to pay down a debt that, of course, they never paid down.

Mrs MILLER: Cruel and heartless!

Mr LANGBROEK: About the particular community groups?

CHAIR: The time for non-government questions has finished. I call the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: Can the minister please update the committee on how we are addressing bullying in our schools?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member. Once again, this is a significant issue that continues to raise its head. All parents are concerned about these bullying issues. I would like to advise the committee about personal experiences that I have encountered as I have travelled around as the minister. At that United Voice conference on Saturday a teacher's aide came up to me to speak to me specifically about her daughter's experience at a Brisbane state high school where her child was bullied. Again, it was about online bullying. We have seen some significant issues that I saw reported yesterday about a school in America where some of the consequences of actions taken by children on social media can follow them for some time and can end up having terrible tragic effects.

I am proud to advise the committee that our state is leading the way in those ministerial councils to which I refer in making sure we support our principals in taking strong action against inappropriate behaviour including bullying. We have a suite of Working Together Against Bullying resources available on the Department of Education, Training and Employment website for teachers so that they can appropriately manage bullying in their classrooms and playgrounds so that they can vigilantly and proactively address incidents of bullying. Every state school has a responsible behaviour plan for students which outlines the expected standards of behaviour and consequences for not meeting those standards. These plans also contain specific information about strategies the school uses to address bullying.

At my meeting with other ministers from across Australia in April we agreed to continue national action to address this issue through the national Safe and Supportive School Communities project, which Queensland manages. As I say, we are leading it. Queensland manages the Safe and Supportive School Communities project on behalf of all Australian education jurisdictions. There are high-quality tools for use in school communities across Australia including the new 'Bullying. No Way!' and Take a Stand Together websites and supporting an iPhone app which I have referred to in the House. This was launched in March 2012 on the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence. The websites are acknowledged as being one-stop portals—

Mrs MILLER: Point of order, it should be pointed out that this was a Labor government initiative.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to acknowledge that because, if anything, this is not a partisan issue. As parents, it does not matter which side of the political tracks you come from, all of us are concerned about the deleterious effects of bullying. If, as I have, you have had daughters who have been affected or you are a Labor person—especially when children become non-communicative and therefore are not prepared to tell you about what is happening—it is something that we have to address as a system.

I am happy to acknowledge that the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence in March 2012 was held in the context of a Queensland state election. I do not remember hearing much about it on the day, but we are absolutely committed as a government to continuing to work on this. The websites are acknowledged as being one-stop portals that provide information and advice on bullying, harassment and violence for teachers, parents and students. It is something that we are all passionate about and I know that it is something on which we are proud to lead the nation. We will continue to work on it and continue to put the resources in that have also been provided by other states.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Can the minister update the committee on the rollout of the Australian curriculum?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member. Of course, there has been significant publicity about the Australian curriculum. It continues, as the director-general mentioned, and I will ask her to complete some of the things that she mentioned before about the senior curriculum that is now being developed in a number of subjects at those ministerial councils when we as ministers task the curriculum authorities to keep working on this. One of the things that we acknowledge and that the director-general acknowledged at last week's Showcase Awards for Excellence in Schools is that it has been a tough a year for implementing many aspects because change is difficult. We are the first to acknowledge that from January 2012 Queensland schools commenced implementation of the

Australian curriculum from prep to year 10 in English, maths and science. We are commencing implementation of the Australian curriculum for history in prep to year 10 in 2013. Education Queensland schools, including the schools of distance education, have been provided with a comprehensive collection of curriculum planning materials and resources—curriculum into the classroom—otherwise called C2C to support and guide their implementation of the new curriculum. The C2C materials, including whole-school year level classroom planning examples and distance education examples provide a model for how schools can plan for teaching, learning and assessment using the Australian curriculum.

The materials offer a starting point—and I think this is important, and I will ask the director-general to address some of the queries that we have had about this. It is a starting point; it is not necessarily prescriptive for schools from which to adapt or adopt work programs and assessment to suit the unique needs of their students. Of course, the Distance Ed students have unique needs as well. I have been asked about that in the House itself. We have provision of C2C materials tailored for their use. Significant extra resources have been put into the school of distance education to ensure we address some of the problems that have been expressed to me by parents and people in the system itself. The C2C distance education materials have been planned and written by officers who have taught in distance education, small schools and/or multilevel settings and include information and guidelines to support their use and delivery. I would like the director-general to advise the committee just briefly about the process or maybe the history of the curriculum.

CHAIR: Minister, I would remind you that the time has virtually expired.

Mr LANGBROEK: We will come back to that.

CHAIR: Thank you. The time has expired and we will now adjourn for 30 minutes. On our return we will continue to examine the estimates of the portfolio of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment in respect of education and employment. The hearing will resume at 12 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 11.29 am to 12.00 pm



CHAIR: The hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee is now resumed. We may continue with the organisational unit of education as well as employment. The first period of questioning for this session is allocated to the non-government members. I call the member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just have a couple more education related questions, Minister. Minister, I just want to have a brief discussion, from page 21 of the SDS, about the diversity unit. Can you please advise how many full-time equivalents there were in the diversity unit of the Department of Education, Training and Employment on 26 March 2012 and how many there are today?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to provide those details. I have a briefing note that speaks about the actual unit itself, which of course is one that was dealing with employment diversity within our department. Everyone acknowledges that it has been important over the years—whether it is about Indigenous issues, people with a disability or in general—to promote equal employment opportunities. The unit was involved with policy development and reporting obligations. It developed a range of professional development and cultural awareness education programs that were aimed at corporate, school, TAFE and regionally based staff. The programs were aimed at developing the cultural competency of all staff, including those staff working directly with children.

In terms of the numbers, I know that we can get those numbers to you. The diversity function, though, forms part of the ongoing human resource provision of my department. It continues to reach students across Queensland through its work in promoting and supporting diversity and equity awareness and initiatives to staff. I am happy to take it on notice to provide that number to you.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Minister. Has the diversity unit been axed?

Mr LANGBROEK: No. I just said that we are going to make sure it is an important part of the human resource service provision of my department. We acknowledge that diversity of employment is a significant issue and we will continue to make sure there is more generalised acceptance. That is something that the director-general and I have discussed. Obviously we always want to encourage employment diversity. I see those workers all the time in my department as I go to my office and meet with them. Likewise, we see in our schools that we have embraced diversity in terms of the schoolchildren who come to our schools and the students in our TAFEs. It is very important to point out to the committee that the functions will continue through Corporate Services.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I now want to ask some questions from page 3 of the SDS about Indigenous education. I understand that the decision has been made to close the Indigenous Education and Training Futures division. Is it not the case that Queensland had been making significant improvements to education outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders and that the abolition of this division will contribute to a decline in educational standards?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, I am going to be at great pains to point out that Queensland has been highlighted in a couple of reports as closing the gap at a faster rate than any of the other states in terms of Indigenous education. We have provided a

lot of support, along with the federal government. I know that Peter Garrett, the federal minister, is very congratulatory about our results in Indigenous education. By the way, for the committee's consideration, we have the second highest number of Indigenous students, just behind New South Wales. In terms of the results that we have been achieving, Professor Hughes released a report only a couple of months ago that shows we have made the greatest strides in closing the gap.

In answer to the honourable member's question, what we have said is that, just as every department has had to have significant issues addressed in terms of funding—the Indigenous section of my department has also had to face some of these budget cuts—the important people, who are the ones who are delivering these Indigenous outcomes, are the principals and the teachers who are in those communities.

It is also important to point out to the committee and to the wider community that we are not just speaking about isolated communities. Many of the members I see before me on this committee would have schools in their electorates that have a significant number of Indigenous students, as the honourable member who asked the question has in her electorate. Eighty per cent of Indigenous students are in metropolitan areas. They are not, as I think many Queenslanders would imagine, in the cape or the gulf or in those areas that we often hear about, on which there is so much focus in the media.

In terms of answering the member's question, my department and the government remain committed to improving Indigenous outcomes but, as my department is not excepted from the changes taking place right across the Public Service, there have been some changes to the Indigenous section. The director-general may care to add to that.

Ms Grantham: The functions of the Indigenous education and training unit have not been lost but we have reorganised them. You would be very well aware of the issues. The Indigenous support service units—you have one in your electorate—work closely with schools. The majority of people in that unit are actually located in the regions and they work closely with schools to support what is happening in schools. The central office function of policy and programs will be under the direction of the area that deals with policy and programs, and the state schooling aspect will be under the direction of the deputy director-general of Education Queensland. So these functions have not been lost.

We will work absolutely to ensure we do not lose the focus, drive and direction that we have—that the policy that has been in place for a number of years now will continue, that the practices will continue to be highlighted and expected in principals' performance agreements as well as regional directors' performance agreements, as well as people who are actually delivering this service out in the regions. We are very proud of the work that our schools and our policy makers have been doing in this area. We will ensure that the fact it is organised differently in central office makes no difference to the ultimate delivery that happens in our schools.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, just to clarify, how many positions were there in this unit and how many are there now, following the budget?

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, I am happy to provide those figures on notice.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, you said that you were committed to training of Indigenous students across the state. I note that school attendance rates in Aurukun have gone from 43.7 per cent in semester 1 of 2007 to 73.9 per cent in semester 1 of 2011. I think you would agree with me that that is a huge jump in attendance levels. By reducing so many positions in the Indigenous education unit, can you guarantee that school attendance rates in our cape communities will not decrease under your leadership?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I can advise the honourable member that 16 full-time equivalent positions have been lost from that unit.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Sixteen out of how many?

Mr LANGBROEK: You asked how many it has been reduced by. I took it on notice and I have provided that, but I will happily provide the other detail.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you.

Mr LANGBROEK: Coming back to the issue of attendance, certainly in some communities there has been a big increase. You mentioned Aurukun, but I note that Mornington Island had a significant increase along similar lines. The important thing is to work out what is helping achieve increased attendance rates. The director-general works very closely with a community in Western Queensland. We know that some of the things that have been proposed do not necessarily work. So the SEAM trial is something that we said we would stop. For the benefit of other members of the committee, money was being withheld to try to make kids go to school. We found that in the short term that worked but in the long term it did not. It comes back to what I said, honourable members may remember, at the start of this committee hearing about ensuring what we do is evidence based.

In answer to the general thrust of the honourable member's question, we are absolutely committed to making sure that we keep supporting our Indigenous students, just as we are committed to supporting all students in our schools. There is no doubt that we are as committed to closing the gap as any jurisdiction. In fact, it has already been acknowledged that we are doing better than any other jurisdiction, along with Western Australia.

The director-general did address the issue of the specific unit still having its purposes carried out, or the jobs carried out, in other sectors of my department. On the issue of attendance, I will ask the director-general to comment.

Ms Grantham: Prior to 2012 the Aurukun campus was part of Western Cape College. That movement in attendance had been happening under the leadership at Western Cape College. So there has been a long drive in that community to increase attendance. The Aurukun campus is now a campus of Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy, and they have sustained that good improvement in attendance. They will be the first to admit that 74 per cent is definitely not where we want to be. They have case managers, as you know. That town is actually part of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial. So there are a whole lot of things happening in that community to ensure that students attend school, that the value of education is understood—that you cannot attend school for 7½ days out of 10 and expect to get a great education.

So everyone in every school is putting a real emphasis on making sure kids attend school. That policy obviously is driven out of central office, but it actually translates into practice at the school—how the school interacts with the community, how the principal works with the community elders, how the principal can be at the school gate welcoming children to school and making them want to come to school, and how teachers in classrooms are looking at what they are delivering in their classroom practice to make sure the content is culturally relevant so that students are actually identifying with what is being taught and love coming to school. So they are all the things we are working on.

Attendance is not a single strategy; it is multifaceted. Our principals in our schools and our community leaders are really aware. In your electorate there are some wonderful community leaders who are really assisting with the school drive to make sure attendance is maximised.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you, Director-General. Minister, I now want to move on to employment matters. I refer to page 1 of the SDS where it sets out your ministerial responsibility for employment. I also refer to the employment section on your department's website. I table a document for the committee's benefit. Considering that one of the only employment programs left remaining on this website is for retrenched public servants from the Newman government's program of job cuts, will you be removing 'employment' from your title as minister or will you be now calling yourself the 'minister for unemployment'?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question and speak about some of the ongoing functions of the employment section of my portfolio. Obviously employment is a government priority. We have committed to a four per cent unemployment target over the next six years. We obviously need input from all departments to ensure the Queensland labour market operates as efficiently as possible. There is no doubt, though, that employment is a federal government responsibility, and that is why some of the difficult decisions that have been made in my portfolio have been with the sense of saying to the federal government, 'This is your responsibility. You spend \$1.8 billion in this state on specific employment programs through Job Services Australia and the disability section of that department.'

We are obviously making sure that we are supporting the unemployment target. We want to get the state's finances into good shape, because we already know that if we fix the finances, as the Treasurer and the Premier have said, we will also have a strong economic environment which will foster future job creation in the private sector, especially in the four pillar areas of tourism, property and construction, agriculture and resources.

We are improving the VET sector to make it more responsive to industry vocational education and training. One of the first decisions I made was to jointly fund with the Australian government fly in, fly out coordinators in the Wide Bay-Burnett and the Gold Coast. I have obviously been to the Gold Coast, being my home town, and met with the local RDAs, the regional development authorities, and been to the Wide Bay-Burnett to see what they are doing in Hervey Bay, where we have significant underemployment, great unemployment and also significant issues of lack of participation. That is what we are seeking to address. Even last night Bill Shorten said that, in answer to the fact that the unemployment rate was going up, that was partly because of an increased participation rate, because we know that an increased participation rate will lead to greater productivity.

There are other areas of course. In my department we still have 21 people with expertise in labour market policy, economics and migration matters. This team forms part of the skills and employment division within the Department of Education, Training and Employment. It will provide whole-of-government leadership on labour market and migration issues to help drive a strong and healthy labour market in Queensland, which the Treasurer acknowledged in the budget is a significant issue. On the

skilled and business migration visa issue, Queensland has been significantly underrepresented. I think we were getting one per cent of those visas. I am having a meeting with the Treasurer and will continue to do so we can actually do something about getting more employment in Queensland, as we have committed to doing.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, through you I have a question for the director-general. Director-General, can you advise when the report titled *Evaluation of Skilling Queenslanders for Work* by Deloitte Access Economics was provided to the minister's office, either in final or draft form, and when was the minister's office made aware of the report? I am just wondering if it was before the budget or after the budget.

Ms Grantham: I will have to get the dates. I think it was after the budget, but I will just get that. But we had the report for a couple of weeks prior to our briefing the minister on the outcome. This advice is Deloitte's were contracted by the previous government to evaluate Skilling Queenslanders for Work at a cost of \$190,000 and that report was received by the department on 23 July 2012. The decision to cease the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program was made in the week prior to receiving that report.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The decision was made before receiving the report?

Ms Grantham: Yes. A week earlier the tough decision was made to cease the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, so that would be the date. So it was received by the department on 23 July. The decision had already been made, but the outcome of that report was not reported to the minister. I remember advising him at a meeting that we had received a report but we were still unpacking it and going through the finer detail.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, I now go back to your portfolio responsibilities of Employment—trying to ensure that more Queenslanders do get jobs and have the opportunity. I now refer to your answer to question on notice No. 1. I just want to read for the committee what the minister said. It reads—

From the commencement of the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative in July 2007 over five years to 30 June 2012, 116,836 disadvantaged job seekers were provided assistance to become work ready or were supported through subsidised apprenticeships or traineeships, including school based arrangements.

Minister, over 116,000 people were assisted into employment. How can you sit there as Minister for Employment having axed a program that saw over 116,000 people obtain a job?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. For the benefit of honourable members, the honourable member was referring to non-government question on notice No. 1.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That was your answer. I read your words.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, of course. I am happy to acknowledge the answer, but it does not get away from the fact that something that I have also spoken about in this House of which members will be aware—that is, that Queensland was contributing to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program more than any other state. In fact, as I remember the facts, South Australia was making a small contribution while we were contributing over \$100 million for these programs. No-one questions the worthiness of the programs.

Ms PALASZCZUK: So why did you axe it?

Mr LANGBROEK: As I have said, wherever I have been around the state—and I have met Queenslanders who are working in neighbourhood groups in Proserpine, in Townsville, in Cairns—they were very difficult decisions, but this is a federal government responsibility. It is not a judgement on the merits of the programs; it is an unavoidable decision in difficult economic circumstances. I just said that we are spending over \$100 million on something that the federal government spends \$1.8 billion and they need to be putting more resources into Queensland. In fact, I sent them copies of the Deloitte report and I have actually written to both of the federal minister who is responsible for these particular areas, the Hon. Chris Evans, the Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations, pointing out to him the Deloitte Access Economics report, and also to the Hon. Bill Shorten, the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Financial Services and Superannuation asking them to consider the impacts of the Deloitte report. Madam Chair, I seek leave to table those letters for the benefit of the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Leave is granted.

Mr LANGBROEK: Just completing that answer as part of tabling those documents, what I would like to do is ask the member for Inala, the shadow minister, to commit to making the same sorts of approaches to federal ministers who are of the same political stripes as her—

Ms PALASZCZUK: Minister, with all due respect, I ask the questions. When you were opposition leader, you got to ask the questions. The same rules apply for this estimates hearing.

Mr LANGBROEK: All we are suggesting is that she might do it because that would be a great thing for us to do—standing up for Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: And you have axed 116,000 jobs over a five-year period. That is 20,000 people a year who were gaining employment. You are the Queensland Minister for Employment and you have axed the program.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you said that the participation rate had increased. Is that right?

CHAIR: Thank you, members. The time for non-government questioning has expired. Minister, I return to the maintenance backlog of Queensland schools. Could the minister please explain the extent of the maintenance backlog in Queensland schools and what the government is doing to address this?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank you for the question. This is a significant issue about which there was some debate before the morning tea break that we just had about the quantum of what the backlog was and whether Labor had been actually doing anything or enough about it. To that end I would like to provide some details of what the backlog was. It was actually increasing every year. It had been suggested that I was saying that Labor had not done anything about it. I had actually said they just were not doing enough. I am happy to provide all of those details—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I rise to a point of order. The minister clearly said, 'Labor did nothing.'

CHAIR: Thank you, member for—

Ms PALASZCZUK: You can correct the record.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Inala.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is what you said—Labor did nothing.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. The maintenance backlog in 2008-09 was \$138 million. The maintenance budget in that year was \$136.1 million. But as the budget blew out further and obviously Labor found itself under pressure. The next year in 2009-10 the maintenance backlog was \$194 million and the maintenance budget was \$138.5 million, so there is obviously a significant issue of nearly \$60 million less than was needed. In 2010-11 the maintenance budget was \$105.7 million against a backlog of \$224 million. Then in 2011-12 the backlog was \$297 million and the budget was \$133.8 million. Of course, there is asbestos as well which is a significant issue throughout our schools which was a separate issue.

So we can see from that, and as I have already pointed out to honourable members, this announcement by our government in the recent budget which will significantly address that backlog is something the former government refused to do anything about, and the quantum was blowing out. All I can say specifically about schools in the honourable member for Inala's electorate, for example, is that Camira State School had a total maintenance liability of \$131,900. They will get \$131,900 in 2012-13. For Carole Park State School it is \$510,850. They will get \$160,000 towards that. But the honourable member for Inala seems to be suggesting that they should have been happy with what they were getting as opposed to what they are getting now, which is \$160,000. In total when I look through Darra State School, Durack State School, Forest Lake State School, Glenala State High School, Richlands East State School, Serviceton South State School and Western Suburbs State Special School, their total maintenance liability is \$1,600,250 of which this government is funding \$921,400. I am sure it will be welcomed, but of course the member for Inala was suggesting that what Labor had been doing before was enough. It clearly was not enough and we are addressing that problem through the maintenance budget.

Ms PALASZCZUK: You said Labor did nothing. This is your opportunity to correct the record.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to debate this point with the member for Inala, but the bottom line is we are giving the schools in her electorate \$921,400 which clearly, according to the statistics I have already provided to the committee, was going backwards under Labor. We are fixing it, as we were elected to do.

Mr LATTER: Minister, my question is directed to the director-general, but I welcome your feedback. My question concerns the Families as First Teachers education initiative as detailed in the department's Closing the Gap education strategy. Can the department detail how this initiative is being delivered and what metrics are being used to determine the success or otherwise of this initiative?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. The director-general will of course have something to add to anything I say, but it is a key Closing the Gap strategy, and we have addressed Indigenous education issues already in this group of questions. When we speak about the early years being so important, of course that is across-the-board. So for improving literacy, numeracy, language and parental engagement in the early years cohort, that is such an important thing that we are doing. So we are aiming to increase the engagement of Indigenous parents of zero- to four-year-olds in early childhood programs and activities that support school readiness. Of course, that fits with the 50-40-10 that I have invoked a number of times already about the fact that 50 per cent of the outcomes that we get in education are actually from parents. I acknowledge, as I have already done, that not all parents are the same and have the ability or the willingness or the time because of other pressures to be involved in the school activities of their children, but Families as First Teachers initiatives have been determined as being an important priority of the government.

As I have mentioned, the critical research continually demonstrates the importance of the first three years. So what we have here is intensive, targeted and coordinated support in a community context for parents and care givers enabling flexible service delivery. It has enabled communities to adapt the program to cater for specific needs of different communities, which of course we all acknowledge often happens in Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is something that we are committed to. I know the honourable member has many of these students and families in his electorate, as do other members here. I invite the director-general to add to my comments.

Ms Grantham: Families as First Teachers first began in 2005. It is a great program to support those early years. The interesting part about this program is that it will not look the same in any two communities, and the minister referred to the adaptability of the program. The flexibility has enabled communities to really take it and shape it to what suits their particular circumstance, so it is a great program. The real benefit comes when we see children enter into prep or pre-prep in some Indigenous communities where their readiness for school is much higher, and that is because of this engagement and this program that they have been undertaking with their families. The impact we can see flow through is in participation, in attendance and certainly we are looking to make sure that that translates into better outcomes for the students.

Mr PUCCI: Minister, Queensland has not traditionally performed well on NAPLAN tests by comparison with other states. Why is that and what is being done to address this situation?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. When we speak about the media coverage that we have in my portfolio of Education, Training and Employment, there is no doubt that NAPLAN results are ones that lend themselves to easier media coverage—whether it is in your local community or any of our local communities, it is easy. In fact, I think anyone who would look at the website or any of the results is always tempted to look at their own schools, their children's schools and the schools around them. We need to keep the tests in perspective. It is very important to remember—and I have said this ever since I have been the minister—that these results represent what students actually do in a few hours of testing across three days in May each year. It is important to remember that we have a world-class education system. I think sometimes when we have people who criticise particular things in our system, by OECD standards we are one of the highest performing countries in the OECD. Importantly, NAPLAN gives us additional information on where we can improve. That is what we should be looking at NAPLAN to do. That is what it was originally intended for.

But, of course, test results move around a little each year. We are looking for improvement over the longer term and we have established that trend since 2008. The 2012 Queensland results show that we posted the highest number of statistically significant gains of all the states and territories over the 2011 results. Since 2008, Queensland's average scores have improved in 14 of the 16 comparable test areas and eight of these are statistically significant improvements, which is the second highest number of improvement areas of all states and territories in Australia. It is very important to keep this in perspective when we speak about percentages that can be from 92 per cent to 94 per cent. We are speaking about nine out of 10 of Queensland students achieving at or above the national standard. That is something that I think we do not necessarily consider when you look at a league table, because a league table will always have, obviously, someone who is at 95 above 92. But it means that of those students in that school, in that area, we still have over 90 per cent—92 per cent to 95 per cent, for example—achieving at or above the national standard.

Our younger students remain positive. All the work that we have already spoken of this morning—I have advised the committee about the early years—has happened with our Queensland year 3s in 2012 improving further over 2011, recording their strongest ever performance in four of the five test areas since NAPLAN began 2008. This is the second full cohort of prep students to move through year 3. We expect to see continued improvements as these students move through their schooling.

Every teacher and principal is focused on improvement strategies to ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need in literacy and numeracy to enable them to make the most of their learning and life opportunities. We know that, as a government, this requires a long-term commitment to a consistent course of action and we have set ourselves the aspiration of being among the higher performing states by 2020. As part of this we have made significant monetary contributions, some of which we have spoken about today: \$4 million over four years to implement the Step Up Into Education program to better prepare students for school, particularly those children in areas of disadvantage; \$54 million over four years to ensure that 600 prep classes have access to full-time teacher aides; and I have already mentioned that 154 classes will access over 2,300 teacher aide hours per week from the start of 2013; and, of course, we also mentioned the literacy and numeracy programs, \$6.5 million this year as part of a four-year \$26 million getting the basics right initiative that provides principals with funding to select tailored literacy and numeracy programs to meet the needs of their students.

With NAPLAN it is also important to remember our state's diversity, with 1,239 state schools and nearly 500 in the independent and Catholic sector. It is very important to remember that when we compare Queensland in a league table with the ACT. We will always see those league tables being

presented and, as people pointed out to me from my first ministerial council meeting, the minister in the ACT can have all 120 principals in his or her office in 45 minutes. We cannot do that in Queensland. That gives you an idea of the diversity in our schools. We have a massive number of small schools—regional, remote, Indigenous—and the diversity, of course, with disability et cetera means that we cannot be comparing in a league table the results with other states where the jurisdiction means that they have a completely different number of schools and the issues that affect us are very different.

Mr SYMES: Can the minister update the committee on the recently completed enterprise bargaining agreement with Queensland teachers?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and certainly acknowledge that a great amount of work has gone in over the past six months. We have been able to achieve an enterprise bargaining agreement that has meant that we have reduced the number—from 33 pages down to 15—and we have had compromises so that we can be responsible in a budgetary sense for an agreement that expired on 30 June 2012. Of course, there were significant meetings—I think almost 33 meetings that I believe our department may have had with the union and then, of course, about four meetings, as I recall, in the Industrial Relations Commission to reach this agreement. The agreement was reached on about 28 September 2012 and I stood with Kevin Bates, who is the president of the Queensland Teachers' Union, acknowledging that there have been compromises on both sides—comprises in the interests of the students who we seek to represent and, of course, their parents and the teachers themselves, the vast majority of whom I know are doing a job they are passionate about, doing something that they love. It is a vocation. It is not something that they have done for any reason other than the fact that they love doing what they do.

The important aspects of the agreement that took some time to come to were about an annual salary increase of 2.7 per cent commencing on 1 September and enhancing schools' capacity to manage and best direct their resources to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Of course, this is still subject to the union's internal approval processes, but I am confident that, with the direction of the union leadership, the formal ballot will be conducted and will come down favourably. We have kept many of the aspects that the union wanted to have kept in there. Class size targets are kept, even though I have already pointed out that we had no intention as a government to change the class size targets—and, of course, 95 per cent of our class sizes are within those targets, anyway—there is the Remote Area Incentive Scheme and, of course, pay for beginner teachers. They are all issues that we have kept in the enterprise agreement. I encourage teachers to vote in favour of the proposed agreement. Most importantly, it has happened without the prospective industrial action that was, I think, set down to be on this day. For the first time since 2006 I am advised that we will not have any industrial action, which, of course, would have significantly impacted students, parents and teachers throughout the state with only a few weeks left to go in term 4.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, can you inform the committee of the strategies in place to increase parental involvement in our school communities?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for that question, because I referred earlier today to our decisions and the budgetary decisions that have been made with this particular statistic in mind and that is that statistic of 50 per cent of outcomes being attributable to parents and community. We know there is a wide body of research that supports the impact that parents and community engagement can have on student achievement. So it does not matter the economic background, racial background or educational background of students of all ages, we know that we have a diverse range of communities and that each school has its own context to respond to.

For this reason schools, parents and communities individualise strategies to suit their particular needs. Across the state there are a huge variety of strategies being employed such as the Queensland Ready Readers program, which trains community volunteers to support students in early reading programs in Queensland schools. There are communications protocols between staff and parents such as those established for the low SES national partnership so that we have staff not doing the bare minimum and being at school and just saying, 'If you turn up that's fine' but being proactive. Of course, it takes a lot of work to get out there in the communities. I will ask the director-general to speak about the school for which she is a mentor where we have seen changes in attendance as a result. This is about involving the community and making the point to our parents that we have their children in our schools for only 13.5 per cent of the time. That is a significant figure. When we think that schools and the education department and the government are responsible for what is happening in our schools—and wherever I go I highlight this point—I say to the people of Queensland that we only have students for 13.5 per cent of the time. So how can we be held responsible for everything that happens for the children when we have them for only 13.5 per cent of the time. Surely, there should be some shared responsibility by parents and the community. We are asking people to engage with us in that.

Because of that, our promises about independent public schools and the P&C maintenance funding—where we are encouraging P&Cs to work with their principals to get local people who may be able to contribute towards doing some of the maintenance—are deliberate strategies to say, 'We want

our communities to be involved.’ We do not want schools to be fenced off between 3 pm and 9 am and that the community does not really know what is happening in there and does not have anything to do it. The more that we can engage our communities will help to set the strategic direction of the school with targeted and personalised communication. We know it takes more work but, as the director-general will advise the committee, it has worked significantly in the community that she has been the mentor.

Ms Grantham: I am proudly the government champion for Cunnamulla in south-west Queensland, which is a community that is quite isolated, really. Sixty per cent of the population of that community is Indigenous. When I was conducting a negotiation table the school principal was doing a presentation and was talking about the difficulty of having students not attend full time. The attendance at that time was in the low 70s. I stood up and I said to the parents and the broader community, ‘Do you realise that a student at the end of grade 10 who has only attended 74 per cent of the time is actually a student who has a grade 7 level of education? That is not acceptable.’ I think for the first time the community really thought, ‘Is that what we want for our children?’ Certainly, by me saying that it is not good enough was the first time anyone had said that to them publicly.

So through my assistant director-general we sent in what we call a turnaround team that did not just work with the school, because the school on its own cannot make this sort of change. This is about bringing together the influential people within the community—the parents and the school community and the school itself—to actually sit down and say, ‘What are the barriers for students not attending school? What are our responsibilities that each of us have in making sure that children attend?’ If you are the shopkeeper, if the child is in your shop and should be at school, what is your responsibility?’ It was about looking across the broader community to see what role the police would play, the health worker would play, the shopkeeper would play, the principal would play and the parent would play and coming back and emphasising to parents the value of an education, the importance of getting an education and how it can change the future of those children.

So it is a success story. They have had great increases in their attendance. I was very pleased to see that the *Courier-Mail* did a feature story on Cunnamulla State School just a couple of months back. What that says to me is, ‘Good on that school for actually engaging in this and good on that community for picking up all the responsibilities that they all share in making sure that those children attend school.’ So it is a real success story of a turnaround teamwork with the local community, identifying what the responsibilities are and people then coming together to fulfil those responsibilities for the betterment of the children’s future.

CHAIR: Thank you. I will now call on the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I table a fact sheet from Queensland Treasury, which sets out the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate of 6.3 per cent for September and the trend unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent, which is now the highest in a decade. Considering that unemployment is projected by Treasury to average above the global financial crisis levels in Queensland this financial year—and the reference point is page 34 of the Budget Paper No. 2—will you consider reintroducing an employment program rather than spending 60c on a stamp to send a letter to Canberra?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously, this is a very serious topic. Unemployment is something that we are committed to reducing and getting a much higher level of employment. We know that the 2012 budget forecast higher unemployment rates through 2013-14 and it is important, too, that we have to increase productivity.

Mr MULHERIN: How high?

Mr LANGBROEK: It is important that we make sure that we stick to our long-term plan and that is to say that we know all the forecasts are that there will be a lot of job opportunities in Queensland. We have seen the recent weak jobs growth and we have seen the Queensland participation rate fall to a six-year low. It has occurred as the population ages and discouraged workers exit the labour market. We have participation rates for women and Indigenous people that remain low, with Indigenous employment—

Mr MULHERIN: A point or order, Madam Chair. I think the minister may be misleading the committee. The trend unemployment rate said it fell but previously said it had increased.

CHAIR: I think the minister is answering the question.

Mr LANGBROEK: Indigenous unemployment is almost four times that of non-Indigenous unemployment. We obviously acknowledge that increased workforce participation can have significant social and economic benefits. For example, a Grattan Institute report estimates a GDP boost of \$25 million if women workers increase by six cent. The Supporting Women Scholarships program aims to assist women to undertake study in traditional male dominated fields experiencing skills shortages from certificate IV to postgraduate level. These scholarships will provide women with the opportunity to begin or increase their qualification attainment which will translate into economic and social benefits for the community upon their entry into the workforce.

There is no doubt that we have skills shortages. That is exactly why we have a Skills and Training Taskforce which is looking at the skills shortages issue. We have areas where skilled workers for regional projects cannot be sourced locally and, of course, the honourable member for Mackay will be acutely aware of that. We have companies training labour locally using fly-in fly-out arrangements. We are committed to making sure that we are not just concentrating on the four pillars. We need to make sure that out of the Skills and Training Taskforce we get proper industry engagement so that we are training appropriately with enough flexibility to make sure that we can, as particular industries have a need for workers, provide those workers through our planning.

As a new government we are committed to turning around a long-term trend. We are going to keep working hard at it and not be affected by month-on-month figures. We have a clear plan and we are determined to deliver on it.

Mr MULHERIN: You said that the participation rate actually increased.

Mr LANGBROEK: I believe that Bill Shorten said that last night nationally.

Mr MULHERIN: In Queensland the trend participation rate fell, if you look at the Treasury figures.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to acknowledge that. And your question?

Mr MULHERIN: I refer to page 5 of the SDS and your department's objectives of growing the economy and reducing unemployment. Why does the SDS contain no targets towards achieving this objective at all, with page 17 of the SDS setting out that all employment related performance targets have been discontinued? Have you given up? You are not going to reintroduce any employment programs for long-term unemployed. You have removed the targets. Have you given up as employment minister?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the member for the question and point out that there are specific reasons why some of those measures have been discontinued. Most importantly, we are absolutely committed as a government to making sure that we—

Mr MULHERIN: Why don't you have targets, if the objective is to grow the economy and not just unemployment?

Mr LANGBROEK: Because one of the things we learnt from the previous government is that there were targets that the government would basically ignore once they had not achieved them and we are determined to make sure we have realistic targets. We have made them very clear: four per cent unemployment over the next six years, making sure we sort out our debt and deficit issues and concentrating on the four pillars which contribute 23 per cent to our state domestic product. We are going to keep working on those issues. The targets that you are mentioning are, as I have seen in the eight years that I have been here—

Mr MULHERIN: It is not gross domestic product, it is gross state production by the way.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank you for that correction, but most importantly the SDS will have different parameters that are measured at different times. There are clear notes there that indicate why they might have been amended. But we are committed to working on the path that we have set. The labour market is one that needs to be constantly investigated and reinvigorated and we are going to keep doing that.

Mr MULHERIN: I refer again to your SDS. As minister for employment, why have you not set these targets—I ask the question again—considering that you have set an unemployment rate of four per cent in six years as promised in your election commitment? You made statements about not putting these targets in that you could not meet. Are you giving up on the four per cent unemployment target?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. I want to point out to the committee that many of the targets that were in the SDS were part of something called Toward Q2. The Queensland electorate soundly rejected Toward Q2 which was a strategy of the former Labor government. They rejected it decisively.

Mr MULHERIN: You are now the government. You have got an employment target of four per cent. You said that you want to grow the economy and reduce unemployment. Why haven't you got employment targets around that four per cent objective?

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, the minister is attempting to answer this question. I would ask you to cease interjecting.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As I have already said, these measures were discontinued due to either the cessation of Toward Q2, which of course the Queensland electorate significantly voted to cease, or the Skilling Queenslanders for Work initiative, which I have also advised the committee was something that we were not going to continue in this budget because it is a federal government responsibility. I can confirm that jobless household targets were in the previous one. We

have seen jobless household numbers increasing. That is always a concern, but we know that if we can build our economy and fix our finances we will have those jobless households getting jobs, participating in our economy and helping to contribute to it. Instead of having a paper target, as the former government had, we have a real target that we are actually going to get to.

Mr MULHERIN: Can you outline what Treasury's projected employment growth forecast is for this financial year and what is the projection for the unemployment rate in four years time?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Those are specific questions that the shadow Treasurer can put to the Treasurer. We have seen a projection within the budget of a slight increase in unemployment over the year, but most importantly we are making sure that we are aiming towards our six-year target. As the minister for employment I will work closely with the Treasurer on those issues of skilled and business migration and on those other issues we are able to work together on, for example, those scholarships for women in traditionally male dominated professions and some of our Indigenous programs, so that we can make sure we develop more strategies to support workforce participation of disadvantaged workers and making sure that those major resource projects get the workers that they need. Last year we got some numbers in relation to skilled and business migration. It contributed 380 jobs but \$318 million in Queensland. Up to now we were getting one per cent of those. Obviously we can source a lot more of those. Those people coming in provide other jobs for Queenslanders because of the money they bring in.

We are committed to making sure that we finish the contracts that are existing for Skilling Queenslanders for Work and making sure we have research on the impacts of structural adjustment in the economy and labour market mobility. Not as the Labor Party would have, which was to say, 'This is how it has been. This is how it will always be and we have to make sure that we kowtow to the unions and that means you cannot have a more flexible economy.' We do not accept that. Queenslanders voted for a change in March. We are delivering that change.

Mr MULHERIN: I find it incredible that you are the minister for employment and you do not know those figures. For your information, the budget papers say that employment growth for 2012-13 is .5 per cent, unemployment in 2015 is 5¼. Minister, I refer to page 34 of Budget Paper No. 2 where it sets out the projected unemployment rate of 5.25 per cent in four years time. Have you requested any advice as employment minister on how many jobs would need to be created within the following two years to achieve the LNP's four per cent unemployment target? If so, how many jobs would need to be created and how does this compare with historical averages?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. He can grandstand all he likes about Treasury statistics.

Mr MULHERIN: You are the employment minister.

Mr LANGBROEK: And I am not the Treasurer.

Mr MULHERIN: But, minister, don't you work closely with the Treasurer?

Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing is that we have the key points about unemployment forecasts and I am happy to provide them to the committee. I have already mentioned that in the state budget we have forecast a rise to six per cent. I can see the member is about to interrupt.

Mr MULHERIN: I am happy to take it on notice.

Mr LANGBROEK: The important thing is we will be making sure that we do not do what the former Premier did in the 53rd parliament which was to set a target to create 100,000 jobs. Did she do it? No. She did not do it.

Mr MULHERIN: She came very close.

Mr LANGBROEK: She came very close. That is admirable.

Mr MULHERIN: About 5,000 or 10,000 short.

Mr LANGBROEK: As the minister for employment I will keep working with the Treasurer on these issues. We are going to make sure we have an extra 2½ per cent forecast for 2013-14. Underpinning the growth is an anticipated improvement in the global economy, domestic demand and business confidence. The strengthening in the employment growth in 2013-14 is expected to see the unemployment rate fall.

Mr MULHERIN: Madam Chair, he is unable to answer the question. Is it possible that the minister could take that question that I asked—and I will repeat the question—on notice? I refer to page 34 of Budget Paper No. 2 where it sets out the projected unemployment rate of 5.25 per cent in four years time. I ask: have you requested any advice on how many jobs would need to be created within the following two years to achieve the LNP's four per cent unemployment target? If so, how many jobs would need to be created and how does this compare with the historical average? Will you take that on notice?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to answer the question.

Mr MULHERIN: You are not answering the question. You have not given us how many jobs have to be created.

CHAIR: I remind the member for Mackay that the minister may answer these questions in any way he seeks. He cannot be forced to take a question on notice.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not going to take that on notice. I am happy to provide the information that I have here. We have a strong outlook. We have the prospect of many thousands of jobs. The 2012 report of the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations projects approximately 830,000 jobs for Australia between 2011-12 and 2016-17 and employment in Queensland is projected to increase by more than 220,000 persons. That represents more than one quarter of the total jobs growth nationally. Of course, that would be performing well above our proportion in terms of population. We are working hard to achieve that. We will continue to do so, unlike what happened in the previous term when we just had this constant focus every month on a target that the former Labor government and the former Labor Premier could not deliver.

Mr MULHERIN: The only factors attributed to the lowering of the unemployment rate over the next four years in the budget papers are a weakening of the Australian dollar and global economic recovery. Does the LNP have any plans to strengthen the employment at all or are you just going to pray for a global economic recovery and a falling Australian dollar? This relates to page 34 of Budget Paper No. 2.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I say, this is a government that works as a team. The Treasurer is working with the Premier and all the ministers. As the minister for employment I will work with the issues that we have identified such as the four pillars or our economy and other aspects of our economy and we will do anything to make sure that we can achieve that four per cent unemployment rate over the next six years. What we are not going to do is to try to affect things that we cannot affect, like the exchange rate as the honourable member just suggested in his question, and miraculously hope for some sort of recovery. We are going to make sure that we have a proper structured plan, with ministers not operating in silos but working together to try to coordinate these issues. As I have already advised the committee, I am going to be meeting with the Treasurer over the next couple of days, as I consistently and constantly do, about particular issues to do with the employment portfolio that cross over into the Treasury portfolio so that we can actually have an improvement in the unemployment rate and make sure that we get to the targets that are predicted in those reports.

Mr MULHERIN: I do hope that you do acquaint yourself with the economic issues rather than just the rhetoric that you have been spinning during estimates. How much of the economy is made up by the education sector in Queensland compared with the LNP's four pillars of the economy?

Mr LANGBROEK: One of the things that I do like to say as I go around is that education underpins every aspect of the four pillars.

Mr MULHERIN: But how much of the economy?

Mr LANGBROEK: I notice that the honourable member had a specific debate with one of our other ministers about potential value. None of it is going to happen without education, I advise the honourable member.

Mr MULHERIN: I agree totally with you on that. We are as one.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is very important to understand that no-one will prosper in any of the four pillars if we do not have education and training underpinning everything that they are doing. In terms of the portfolio value itself, of course the honourable member will know that education and health are the two biggest portfolios in the budget. At over \$9 billion, education is about 22 to 23 per cent of our state budget this year.

Mr MULHERIN: Just for your information, education is 4.1 per cent it is something that I have been fascinated with over a long period. You can ask my former departmental people to verify that. For your information, it is 4.1 per cent compared to agriculture at 2.5 per cent. I refer to page 5 of the SDS, where it references the LNP's four-pillar economy. Considering that education makes up 7.4 per cent of employment in Queensland which is more than two of the LNP pillars combined, mining and agriculture which total only 5.8 per cent, why does your government not see education as an important job in Queensland? Why is it not part of the four pillars?

Mr LANGBROEK: As I said in the last answer, obviously education underpins all the four pillars, not just those two. It is very disappointing that a former minister for primary industries is prepared to write-off his former department of agriculture—

Mr MULHERIN: No, I am not.

Mr LANGBROEK:—saying that mining and agriculture do not contribute as much as education. We can argue about semantics.

Mr MULHERIN: Basically, the Queensland economy is a service economy.

Mr LANGBROEK: We can argue about the semantics, but, as I have already said, the important issue is that nothing is going to happen in those areas or in any other area unless we have people in those areas making sure that they are getting educated, that they are doing all that they can to improve themselves and, of course, are engaging with other parts of our economy to make sure that everything ends up being a success. There is no doubt that within all of those portfolio areas I have a close working relationship with all of the particular ministers and they come to me, whether it be Minister Stuckey, Minister Cripps or Minister McVeigh, who are responsible for those specific areas, and, of course, the Deputy Premier who is responsible for infrastructure and planning. Over-arching support is provided by the Treasurer and the Premier who say, 'We need you all to work together'. Again, that is in contrast to the former government, where there were silos and ministers said, 'I don't want you coming into my portfolio, because this is my area'. Our backbenchers and new members know that that is the case, because they come to us individually with suggestions about how Education, Training and Employment can help them in their areas, because at the end of it all they want people in their electorates to get jobs, and we will ensure we do it. Within the four pillars, whether it is mining and agriculture, which the honourable member seeks to dismiss as not being a very important part of our economy, or other areas of the economy—

Mr MULHERIN: Point of order, Madam Chair. I have not dismissed that. I was making the point that the Queensland economy is a service economy and that the economic policy of the LNP is the four pillars, which only equates to about 46 per cent of gross state production.

CHAIR: Member for Mackay, I remind you that this is not a debate. It is a question and answer session. That draws to a close this stage of non-government sector questions. Minister, I understand that you wish to clarify a couple of points before the next question is asked?

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. In my opening address I said that I wanted to avoid grandstanding and insincere indignation. It appears that that has fallen on deaf ears. I will clarify an issue raised by the opposition leader, the member for Inala, in this committee regarding the proposed closure of the travelling show school and the gazettal process for that closure. As the minister, I am interested in student outcomes. I have said this repeatedly on this issue. First and foremost, I believe that better outcomes are achieved by transitioning the students at the travelling show school into distance education. The current 84 per cent attendance rate and NAPLAN results are not acceptable. Furthermore, only 19 of the 48 students are drawn from Queensland. So, I can advise the committee that we want to transition the children, but we want to transition the children at the appropriate time, which is at the beginning of the school year. From the time that the school was informed on the day of the budget till now, we have sought to work constructively with the relevant stakeholders. This process is not helped by people who ignore the data on attendance and student performance in a bid to popularise their cause.

The administrative process behind the closure is outlined in legislation. Once a gazettal notice is issued for the proposed closure, a minimum of six months will elapse before the school closes and further consultation will continue in this period. That does not mean that the school cannot cease operation before the official closure. In this case, as I have said, I want to make sure these children are in distance education for the start of the next school year. I will continue to try to work constructively with the parents and stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for their students.

Madam Chair, there is another issue that I want to address. As I have previously outlined, the department went through a staged process of identifying vacancies, temporary staff and then deployment or voluntary redundancies of permanent staff. In order to respond to the broad nature of the question, a data file was generated from the departmental payroll systems for terminations that occurred during the period you requested. The teaching separations that you refer to include five voluntary redundancies for permanent teachers from TAFE institutes and the remaining positions are from temporary teaching positions in TAFE, 4.751 full-time equivalents and 3.8 full-time equivalent temporary teachers in regional non-school locations. The termination reasons recorded indicate that these temporary engagements concluded at the end of the period of temporary engagement.

That was an answer in response to non-government question on notice No. 10, which provided a snapshot of terminations and resignations from the non-school part of the portfolio. For the benefit of the member for Inala, teachers employed in the non-school areas of the department were subject to the same considerations as the non-teaching staff, as part of the review of budgets. As the director-general mentioned, regional directors and TAFE directors reviewed their staffing and identified positions that were surplus to their ongoing business requirements.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I now call the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, you have sought to reduce unemployment to four per cent by 2018. Can you please explain to the committee how the government's decision to cut payroll tax and reduce red tape and regulation by 20 per cent will help to achieve that?

Mr LANGBROEK: As the federal government takes back more of its role in helping disadvantaged job seekers into employment, we have begun the work needed to ensure that every part of this government is also focused on creating jobs in the private sector. We are cutting red tape and regulation for business to help get our economy growing and create jobs. As the honourable member just asked, I can provide information that is available from 1 July 2012. The threshold for payroll tax has been increased from \$1 million to \$1.1 million, further increasing the competitiveness of Queensland's tax system, reducing the tax burden on employers and supporting the jobs of thousands of Queenslanders. Government will expand the payroll tax exemption threshold from \$1 million to \$1.6 million over six years, helping over 20,000 businesses and supporting thousands of jobs for Queensland families. Of course, this has been a significant financial promise by the government. The threshold increase provides some room for small businesses to provide wage increases or take on additional employees without becoming liable for payroll tax.

As the honourable member will know from speaking to employers in his own electorate, around the Gold Coast and throughout the state, a plumber may employ 10 to 15 staff. With a payroll tax threshold of \$1 million, we know that we are catching a lot more people as part of that payroll tax threshold. The Treasurer and the Premier have committed to increasing the threshold from \$1 million to \$1.6 million. As members in front of me will know, for many small to medium sized enterprises that has been a significant issue and it has been raised by stakeholders. Payroll tax is a significant proportion of the state revenue that we can raise. We have done the responsible thing. We have given them a concession that will increase over the next five years as well. It is something that shows that we are committed to helping the private sector to grow our economy as well.

Mr LATTER: Minister, I would like to go to what is a very important issue in education. My question concerns the Djarragun College and claims of the government for the repayment of over claimed funding. What is the prospect of the government reclaiming overpaid funding and what impact will this have on the capacity of the school to deliver an essential service?

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly that has been a significant issue in the time that I have been the minister. Minister Peter Garrett is dealing with this at a federal level and we have had a significant state contribution. Very importantly, I want to acknowledge the work of the CYAAA, the Cape York Australian Aboriginal Academy, last year. I visited Djarragun a couple of weeks ago when we held the community cabinet in Cairns. The local community has been able to continue their schooling as a result of the CYAAA taking over that school last year.

There have been a number of accusations about overpayment claims that have been dealt with by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board. Some of the allegations raised involve the deliberate inflation of enrolment numbers in order to obtain state and Australian government grants over and above entitlements. As honourable members may be aware, this also happened in New South Wales, where there has been a significant issue with an Islamic school. My ministerial colleague, Adrian Piccoli, is dealing with that. In Queensland, the over-claiming matter was referred to the Queensland Police Service. We are working with the CYAAA and management. As I said, I have visited the school. No-one questions what they are achieving with their students, but it is very important that any over claimed state grants be repaid.

In September 2011, honourable members will be aware that, as I mentioned, the CYAAA took over the school. Noel Pearson, a director and chairperson of the college, has begun a range of reform initiatives to recognise governance, operational, finance and corporate stability. As I have said, those developments are encouraging for the continuing viability of the schools. For most of the 2012 school year, both schools were fully operational. However, the schools' governing body, which is Djarragun College Limited, temporarily closed Wangetti TAVEC in September 2012. Impacted students were moved to Djarragun College to continue their educational programs. Both schools are expected to be fully operational again in 2013.

Mr PUCCI: My question concerns the Closing the Gap targets set up by COAG. How is Queensland tracking against education-specific COAG targets?

Mr LANGBROEK: Of course, I have addressed this in a small way earlier on with some other questions that were asked of me. Most importantly, the Newman LNP government is committed to ensuring that all students are equipped with the skills and knowledge that they require to achieve their potential. Closing the Gap is a key priority for the Queensland government. As the honourable member mentioned, COAG has established long-term targets to provide a clear focus on the key areas where we want to see a reduction in the performance gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. There are a number of newer members of the parliament who may not be aware of what Closing the Gap is. It was a nice way to bring it all together. Practically, in the time that I have been a shadow minister and now as the minister, the targets have meant that we are aiming to halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade and at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Obviously, there are long-term reforms that require a strong commitment from the entire school community: principals, teachers, support staff, community groups and, most importantly, students and their parents. If we look at the COAG target areas, we can see that under the reading, writing and numeracy measures, using 2011 data which is the most recent, Queensland has met the progress points for NAPLAN 2011 for both reading and numeracy. The COAG Reform Council has not published 2011 writing results progress points. Under the halving the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous year 12 students who received an OP, QCE, QCIA, IBD or VET qualification or who undertook an SAT, decreased from 14.2 per cent to 5.5 per cent over the 2008-11 period. The gap has closed by 8.7 per cent. However, there is more to do. The COAG Reform Council has recently reported that while nearly all states and territories are on track to halve the gap in reading and some are on track in numeracy, this is based on only modest improvements in student performance in NAPLAN testing.

The COAG Reform Council mapped trajectories and has referred to the points on this trajectory each year as progress points. Queensland has met all its progress point trajectory targets in 2011, with 2012 data anticipated to be available later this year. The council also noted that the rate at which Indigenous children stay on to enrol in years 10 and 12 has improved, but school attendance has not. For example, Indigenous attendance rates across all Queensland state schools has remained below the 85 per cent level since 2008 whereas the non-Indigenous attendance rate has remained above 91 per cent over this time.

That is why we will continue to support schools and their communities to focus on lifting school attendance, boosting literacy and numeracy outcomes and transitioning young Indigenous students into senior secondary or into work or further study. At the local level on the Gold Coast my regional director pointed out to me when I was in opposition that he was aware of every Indigenous student in his particular region and was working with them and tracking them in conjunction with their teachers, their parents and their schools. That is how hard we are focused on them, remembering that 80 per cent of these students are actually not in the cape or in the gulf. I think that is a very significant acknowledgement. The wider community needs to understand where these students are.

This is important for the Queensland economy. Young people will achieve better life outcomes through successful schooling and transition to work and study. Schools are working every day to achieve improved outcomes. Schools and their communities should look at their own performance with a view to doing more in this important area of their operations.

Mr SYMES: Minister, you are on the record as saying that the jobs of school cleaners are safe and the current enterprise bargaining agreement will stand. Why is it that the United Voice union is still suggesting publicly that this is not the case?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. At the weekend I spoke at a teacher aide day which was organised by the United Voice union. The commitment was always there to maintain the EB that had been negotiated with both cleaners and teacher aides. The important thing is that the salaries and employment conditions of school cleaners are provided for in the Department of Education and Training Cleaners Certified Agreement 2011 and the Employees of Queensland State Government Departments (Other than Public Servants) Award State 2003.

The agreement was certified by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission on 19 January 2012 and operates for a period of three years from the date of certification. The government has stated on numerous occasions that the certified agreement in place for school cleaners will be honoured. When the reality of the state's financial position was made clear our government had to make some difficult decisions to move towards a more secure economic future. We recognise the impact of these decisions and the concerns raised by those in the Public Service with regard to job security.

I advise the committee that any continued assertion that the government will not honour the agreement with our school cleaners is an attempt at instilling anxiety and uncertainty in the workforce. I, as the minister, have worked with the department to get the message out to our cleaners and to our teacher aides that we will abide by the already signed EB arrangements that had been made before we came into government. We remain committed to them, but it is mischievous in the extreme for unions to try to suggest to their very vulnerable members that maybe we would not. It was disconcerting what they were doing it. We sought to reassure people by letters placed in staff rooms. When making visits as the new minister I was getting feedback from people that unless I was standing there personally saying that their EB will be honoured they did not believe it because the union was putting out there that it was not going to be. It was very concerning for cleaners and teachers aides. We have been reassuring them and will continue to do so.

CHAIR: My question is on early childhood. My question concerns the state government funding of limited hours care services. Can the department outline the rationale for distributing this funding?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. We inherited the situation with regard to limited hours care. It was conducted for some time with federal government funding but that stopped some years ago—I think that was back in 2010. The previous government

covered the limited hours care program funding shortfall left by the withdrawal of federal funding and it continued to maintain its funding commitment as well. In other words, the state government was paying when the federal government had stopped.

It is a matter of great concern to this government and me as the minister that this is happening in a number of areas where we have national partnerships. When a government stops a program for which another government has responsibility, it is the person who makes the announcement who wears the odium about the program stopping. So that is proved with limited hours care.

The program currently funds 35 services in a range of rural, remote and metropolitan locations to provide child care for up to 30 children for not more than 20 hours per week. Can I reassure the committee that all currently funded limited hours care services have funding arrangements until 31 December 2012. So we are supporting the child-care needs of disadvantaged families, primarily located in rural and remote communities across Queensland where many have limited or no access to other early childhood education and care services.

It was not sustainable for us as a government to continue to meet the funding gap that had been left by the withdrawal of funds by the Australian government. Beyond 2012 we have prioritised funding using a range of factors including the availability of access to other early childhood education and care options, existing child-care capacity and the degree of remoteness of each community. At the end 2012, funding will cease for 14 of the 35 currently funded services. Two services are transitioning to long day care and funding will continue in 2013 for 21 services including in Quilpie, Barcaldine, Coen, Surat, Cecil Plains, Magnetic Island and Blackwater.

I point out to the committee that these decisions have affected members of the government as well as members of the opposition. Of course, those members—and some of them are very senior members of the government—have come to me not seeking to have the decision overturned but seeking an explanation as to why this has happened. It has partly been because we want to make sure we support the services in the areas that I have already outlined where there are no alternatives. But in some of the metropolitan areas we have had funding going to areas where there were alternatives, notwithstanding the fact that we know people obviously form an alliance and allegiance and love the centres their children are at. We have had to make these decisions because of the federal government stopping that funding which we have continued but which we can continue no longer.

Mr BENNETT: Continuing on with the early childhood theme. Can you please update the committee on the provision of the universal access to a quality kindergarten program under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is another area where at the ministerial council some years ago the commitment was made, as the director-general has already indicated, to increase our participation rate. We have done it admirably. I will speak about the statistics in a moment. But, unfortunately, the funding for this national partnership—that is, a partnership between the Queensland government and all other governments and the federal government—expires in 2013. We need to have some certainty about that. That is the point that I made at the last ministerial council meeting, as other minister did. The Labor ministers were making the same point to Minister Garrett and Minister Kate Ellis—the federal minister responsible for early childhood—as us. To do our planning and to make sure we create uncertainty in the sector we have to have a commitment from the federal government that it will continue the funding. We all know the financial situation the federal government does not seem willing to face in its attempt to produce a surplus. The Queensland government has committed to providing universal access to quality early childhood education and to making sure that our children can access a kindergarten program regardless of their individual circumstances or where they live. We have been supported by \$252 million in Australian government funding.

Some 68 per cent of children were enrolled in a kindergarten program in 2011, exceeding the target of 65 per cent. With a \$221 million Queensland government funded infrastructure program, 129 extra kindergarten services are to be established by the end 2014. So far, 105 kindergarten services have opened on school sites. We have had that discussion whether we can build more of them. That will depend on the advice given by my department.

More than 1,000 long day care services are approved to deliver kindergarten programs, creating over 28,400 places. This high uptake enabled infrastructure savings of \$100 million to be redirected to recurrent funding to reduce fees for families. What that means is that instead of, as the previous government said it would do in the lead-up to the 2009 election—and madam chair will acknowledge this—building stand-alone kindies we will give people the flexibility of choice. We have seen a take up with over 600 long day care facilities providing such services. We will make sure we have that flexibility. Thankfully the previous government came around in its last term to consider what the member for Burdekin proposed as the shadow minister in the lead-up to the 2009 election. That was that we should have a combination, limited hours day care, hour day care and kindergarten, because that is what the people of Queensland want.

We have provided \$1.2 million to support more than 260 children with a disability to participate in kindergarten programs in 2011-12, with \$500,000 available for grants in semester 2, 2012. Some \$1.2 million is available in financial incentives for teachers relocating to rural and remote areas to deliver kindergarten programs. We are thinking about the teachers as well. Plus we have also got \$30 million available for non-recurrent grant programs in 2012-13 enabling eligible services to apply for funding to promote and enhance the quality of kindergarten programs, renovate and refurbish, support diversity, achieve transport solutions and perform essential service upgrades.

As I have already mentioned, the negotiations are underway to determine the amount of funding available from 2013. I call on the federal government to give us this certainty in Queensland so we do not end up going backwards because of the lack of certainty in a sector that needs certainty for planning. If you are planning a program somewhere you need to know you are going to be able to have federal funding in conjunction with Queensland government funding.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just have one final question to the minister about graduate teachers. There appears to be some concern on the part of final year education students that no graduate teachers will be employed by the Department of Education, Training and Employment for next year and that the metropolitan region has been advised to not even interview new graduates for positions. Can you confirm or deny whether this is the case? Hopefully, it is not the case. If it is not the case, could you outline to the committee how many graduates will be employed for 2012-13?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I come back to my opening statement where I said that we are going to have 270 extra teachers and support staff in our classrooms.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am talking about graduate teachers coming through. You have to break that down.

Mr LANGBROEK: The answer to the non-government question on notice has the anticipated growth of 270 school staff made up of 159 teachers, 95 teacher aides and 16 support staff. I am happy to have the director-general speak to some of this, but it actually ties in with the whole issue of education provision and the courses that we are offering. We have a significant number of unemployed teachers who are graduates of education programs. There are 16,000 in Queensland. I met with the deans of education last week to continue the discussion on teacher quality.

When it comes to the specifics about what is happening in the metropolitan region I will happily have the director-general answer. I just want to point out that we have the significant issue that after the Bradley review the Australian government said that people can do whatever course they want and universities can provide them and they will be funded for those students. We now have the significant issue of many teaching courses—and I think there are nine in Queensland—churning out teachers, not all of whom are in the areas that we specifically need like maths, science, home economics and the industrial area. When it comes to the specifics of your question about the metropolitan region, I am happy to have—

Ms PALASZCZUK: And how many new graduates will be employed next year?

Ms Grantham: We cannot give a definite answer until we know what school enrolments are. Certainly every year we have an oversupply of teaching graduates. Up to 4,000 in any given year graduate from the courses the minister was referring to. In any given year we only employ 700. It depends on growth. This is something that we have been working with the universities on for a very long time. As you know, with 16,000 teachers—12,000 primary and 4,000 secondary—unemployed and seeking work on the state education books that problem has been compounding. This is not a new issue. We get lots of correspondence from upset parents who say, 'My child has finished a four year degree and now there is no hope of a job.' What compounds it is that often graduate teachers want to stay in the south-east. As a system, we are trying to balance getting our teachers back from the country. It is not an easy question to answer.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Is it true about the metropolitan region being told not to interview new graduates?

Ms Grantham: I do not know about that in particular. We will come back to you after lunch on that one. It is a situation that we have struggled with for some time. We would love to be able to influence it more. We would like to influence the training agenda. How do we get more maths and science teachers? How do we get the kids who will go to the country—and they are not all kids because a lot of our graduates are mature age. It is about having programs in place.

Beyond the Range is one of the programs where we ask graduating teachers to do practicums out in the country and in remote communities. They often love it and will stay and seek employment there. They are our harder to staff areas. In terms of the shortage areas, the locations et cetera it is a compounding problem and it is one we are trying hard to address.

CHAIR: Minister, do you agree to take that on notice?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to take the detail about the metropolitan region on notice.

CHAIR: We will break for lunch. On our return at 2.30 pm we will continue to consider the estimates for this portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 1.30 pm to 2.30 pm

CHAIR: Good afternoon, Minister, and departmental officers. This hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee is now resumed. We will consider training within the portfolio of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment. I welcome chief executive officers Mr Rod Camm from Skills Queensland, Mr Aaron Devine from the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE and Mr Pim Borren from the Southbank Institute of Technology who, along with the director-general, can be asked questions directly by the committee. Before we begin the first period of questioning, which will be by the government members, Minister, I believe you had some information you wish to impart.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a couple of points of clarification to questions we took on notice about Indigenous Education and Training Futures. In 2011-12 the Indigenous Education and Training Futures had 152 staff allocated to it across the range of services, programs and projects it delivers using state and Commonwealth funding. In 2012-13 this area of the department's activities allocated 136 FTEs to support the range of activity in its work program for this period.

The second issue was from the member for Inala, the shadow minister, on the question about the diversity unit. I can advise that the diversity unit had 11.8 full-time equivalent positions filled prior to the fiscal repair strategy. There are now seven FTE positions allocated to the human resources branch, with 4.6 FTE currently filled.

The final one was on the question about whether we would be interviewing graduates in the metropolitan region. I can advise that the metropolitan region has already commenced interviewing graduates—this is teacher graduates for next year—with some 150 graduate interviews already conducted since the start of this semester. The regional director has confirmed with me that the graduate interview process for this year will be similar to previous years. There may have been some miscommunication from an officer in the region about the process this year that did not reflect the department's commitment to the teacher recruitment and selection process. Teacher graduates are required to meet not only emerging permanent vacancies but every day across Queensland, as I have already mentioned, thousands of temporary and casual teachers are required to meet the need to replace teachers who are on long service leave, maternity leave and sick leave.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: What has been the effect on Queensland's RTOs under the referral of powers to the Australian Skills Quality Authority?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a piece of legislation that we have dealt with in the time the member has been a member of the parliament. It is a piece of legislation that the previous government considered as well and that we of course continued. On 29 June 2012, our powers in Queensland to register and regulate training organisations and to accredit vocational education and training courses were referred to the Australian government. The benefits include greater consistency of regulation across Australia, the ability to respond more quickly to emerging national issues or risks to the VET sector, increased employer and consumer confidence in the quality of VET qualifications and a potential reduction in red tape.

That of course happened because if there were agencies that provided VET training in more than one jurisdiction that meant that they had to be registered here and then they would have to be registered under an Australian authority. So it was a simple example of saying, 'We're going to make sure there is only one registration authority, an Australian federal one.' Importantly Queensland retains responsibility for primary, secondary and higher education; apprenticeships and traineeships; the requirements to carry on a business, occupation or other work; the funding of vocational education and training; and the establishment of public providers such as TAFE institutes.

The auditing expertise which is held by the department—and this is an important issue for the committee, because many of you may have people coming to you with allegations about RTOs and whether they are providing the training that they say they are, and we do not want to give up the responsibility of making sure that that is being monitored—is now able to focus on reviewing supervised RTOs for compliance with the requirements of their prequalified supplier agreement under the User Choice program. Already this new focus is seeing good results.

Importantly I advise the committee that, for all that we have given this power to the federal government, the referral to ASQA can be terminated if the Queensland government ever deems it necessary. Importantly, as part of the fiscal repair strategy, more than \$3 million is being saved per annum by us referring these people who were in our department to the Commonwealth.

I thank the honourable member for the question and reassure people in his electorate who are concerned about the strength of these matters that some of the training issues we have seen in Victoria recently—and members may have heard of this from some media outlets—have happened even though Victoria did not hand over their registration rights. In other words, they said they wanted to keep

registering RTOs but that has not prevented some of those RTOs that were not providing what they should have been. So it has not prevented that happening in a jurisdiction where they have maintained their own control.

CHAIR: I call the member for Waterford.

Mr LATTER: I refer to page 57 of the SDS, specifically note 4. Minister, can you please explain to the committee the loss on disposal of the Morningside campus and the \$12.5 million in grants to DE TE as part of the PPP?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I point out that the South Bank education and training precinct public-private partnership funding profile includes a number of funding sources. We have existing DE TE funding—we are talking about South Bank on the other side of the river—additional government funding and contributions from the Southbank Institute of Technology, including \$12.5 million from the sale of the Morningside campus. The Morningside campus, which is owned by the Southbank Institute of Technology, was sold in 2011-12 for \$13.5 million. As the property was valued in SBIT's accounts at \$17.233 million, under accounting standards the difference between the sale price and the asset value in the accounts is written down as a non-cash expense in the SBIT's income statement in the year of disposal. This expense is \$3.888 million, including \$154,000 in legal fees, real estate expenses and preparation of the land for disposal.

As DE TE is the PPP manager, the manager of this public-private partnership, it makes the PPP payments. Therefore, the proceeds of the Morningside campus sale are required to be transferred to DE TE. As the proceeds are not required under the funding profile by DE TE until 2012-13, in 2011-12 SBIT has expensed the \$12.5 million payment to DE TE and recognised a payable in its accounts which it will transfer to DE TE in 2012-13. So, while the sale figure was below the initial property valuation, a number of factors were considered when agreeing to the sale price, including a decline in the property market and the significant costs of maintaining the site until a further purchaser proposal could be sourced.

There are a couple of other points relating to the South Bank public-private partnership that I want to have on the record. Honourable members may be aware of the fact that amongst the issues that were mentioned in the Costello Commission of Audit significant issues were both the maintenance shortfall facing the government—which we have attempted to deal with with our budget announcement—and this issue about the funding shortfall for the South Bank education and training precinct. So for new members—I think this is important to have this on the record—in April 2005 the previous government did this first public-private partnership in Queensland. The initial funding required for the PPP was \$1.4 billion. However, there was a funding shortfall of \$81 million in present value at 2005, which equated to \$443 million in nominal terms. This shortfall has since increased to over \$500 million due to contract variations.

So if I can point out to honourable members of the committee, this is typical of the previous government. They have left us with a \$500 million shortfall in the funding which of course is a significant amount—half a billion dollars on a PPP that they were desperate to get up but unfortunately did not fund properly. So that has been something that has been identified as another matter for our government to have to deal with—and deal with it we will.

CHAIR: I call the member for Logan.

Mr PUCCI: Minister, how is the government working with employers to skill our workforce and match skills and training to where the jobs are needed?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. That follows on directly from the previous answer where I spoke about the fact that we do not have \$500 million to put into the training system specifically because we have this shortfall over at the PPP. We want to support industry in addressing skill shortages by making sure that we have greater participation of underrepresented groups in our industry workforces. Through the resources and energy strategy my department has commenced discussions with industry to develop initiatives to attract women and Indigenous Queenslanders to the sector. There is also a property and construction strategy. Work has also commenced on identifying key drivers to attract and retain job seekers—in particular, women, mature age workers and people with disability. The government is also working with the Australian government to refine existing programs and initiatives to address skill shortages in the property and construction industry.

The state sponsorship of skilled and business migrants provides Queensland with opportunities to grow the economy through addressing skill shortages, creating jobs and new businesses, attracting investment, entrepreneurship and international business networks. As I have already mentioned, in the 2011-12 financial year, 174 business migrants who intend to invest more than \$318.3 million and create 384 jobs in the state were sponsored as well as 192 skilled migrants. Queensland's state migration plan provides eligible skills lists of occupations for state nomination which includes 38 occupations for permanent residency and 52 occupations for provisional visas and temporary residency in regional areas of the state.

Consultation is conducted with government, industry representatives and employer groups to match changing economic conditions with the needs of industry throughout the state. Obviously the Newman government is committed to boosting the visa numbers. That was an announcement in the budget that I have already mentioned a couple of times today—the fact that we were getting one per cent of the potential visas through the red tape and regulation that was plaguing the government. We are also trying to assist the resources sector—I mentioned that at the start—with regional workforce planning in both Gladstone and the Surat Basin so that we can have future workforce needs planned for. The assistant minister and I were in Gladstone last week where of course they have significant interest in accessing some federal government funds so they can provide more support to the CSG-LNG industry. We have those other initiatives like the CSG-LNG skills formation strategy to address the resources sector skilling needs.

There is a lot we are doing. There is a lot more to be done. Of course, with skilling, the world can change and unless you change with it that can leave you with a significant problem in the skills workforce.

CHAIR: I call the member for Lytton.

Mr SYMES: Given the continued decline of international students in the Queensland VET sector, what strategies are in place for improving enrolments for the future?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and acknowledge that international students should be something that we are attempting to increase. Obviously post the global financial crisis there has been a significant downturn, with 2,237 international students enrolled with Queensland's public VET providers. That is a 23.3 per cent decline over the previous 12 months. Our providers deliver training to approximately 13.9 per cent of international VET students on a student visa in Queensland from approximately 77 source countries. We are expecting that decline in international student numbers to continue over 2012-13. In June 2012 our market share in Queensland of international student enrolments in Australia's VET public sector was 15.9 per cent. The downturn affecting Queensland and Australia has impacted all sectors of education and training.

The decline commenced in 2010. It was linked to changes to migration policy and other key factors including strengthening of student visa integrity arrangements and implementation of the Knight review recommendations. There is also increased global competition from other major competitors such as the USA, the UK, New Zealand and Canada. Plus we had the lag effect of the global financial crisis and the high value of the Australian dollar. But we do have strategies to revamp it. It is almost like international education happened in spite of government, not because of anything government was doing in the past, and we are determined through my department and by working with the Treasurer to make sure that we work together. I met recently with the ambassador from Mongolia and the ambassador from Austria. Some of these countries are ones where we are providing VET training and we want to encourage their students to come here.

We are looking at diversification of our source markets and products. We want to identify emerging markets, enhance student enrolments and make sure we have transnational delivery partnerships. That refers to us delivering some of our great courses in places like Mongolia, China, Taiwan and other countries that are desperate for the expertise that we have in some of these fields. I am often signing off on these trips from our TAFE trainers who have contracts with these other countries and other institutions. We also want to develop study pathways from the school and English language intensive courses for overseas students, ELICOS, increase study pathways to university degrees, and develop different marketing strategies and delivery models.

CHAIR: Minister, what is this government doing to deliver 10,000 additional apprenticeships as part of the election promise to grow a four-pillar economy?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is another significant election commitment. I think if there has been another overarching theme of today's estimates committee it has been about us making sure we provide to the committee the details that show our determination to deliver on our promises, because it is in stark contrast to what the previous government has done.

We have announced that we are providing up to \$86 million over the next six years to support the employment of 10,000 additional apprentices. To make sure we are well positioned to support this commitment, we have realigned and prioritised user-choice funding to the areas of greatest need based on skills shortages; reviewed the mix of apprenticeship and traineeship pathways to ensure that they align with nationally recognised outcomes and address skills shortage challenges; aligned the joint group training program funding priorities to target apprenticeship commencements; refocused regional activity to maximise the uptake of additional apprenticeship opportunities; and commenced a review of the Queensland government building and construction contracts structured training policy and Construction Skills Queensland initiatives to support additional apprenticeship commencements in the construction industry.

I have mentioned the Skills and Training Taskforce, which will provide advice and make recommendations on the actions needed to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland's vocational education and training sector and achieve the target of 10,000 places. I can advise the committee that we could easily have gone out and found 10,000 apprentices, but 4,000 of those probably would not complete and then some of them would not get jobs at the end of it. As this government has said from the start, we want to make sure that, if there is red tape restricting people from starting new apprenticeships or hiring apprentices, or if there are current regulatory frameworks, that is exactly what the Skills and Training Taskforce is reporting. Beyond that we will make sure we get to the target but end up with people in real jobs, because the attrition rate in apprenticeships is quite remarkable. We need to not just spend \$86 million because we said we would but end up with a maximum number of jobs out of those 10,000 places. The important aspect there is industry engagement, which is exactly what the Skills and Training Taskforce is doing to make sure we work with industry, get rid of red tape for apprentices and then make TAFE reforms which will deliver better skills and training for Queenslanders.

CHAIR: That concludes government questioning. I now call on the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, before lunch we were discussing employment programs and the slashing of those programs. Can you advise what employment programs were running in the electorates of Lytton, Waterford, Logan, Albert, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Burnett and the Burdekin, and the reason why these programs were no longer considered necessary?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am happy to get the specifics about particular programs that we may be running in any of those electorates including the member's own electorate, but it is important to mention, as we have said, that many of those employment programs which we have made decisions about are programs that the federal government should be contributing to.

Mr MULHERIN: You have said that, Minister, and I listened with interest to the government questioning when you talked about assistance around visas for employment in the mining industry. I would have thought that immigration is a Commonwealth responsibility and yet you have dealt yourself into that in making a real point about what the Queensland government does. On the one hand, you will venture into Commonwealth areas of responsibility, but on the other hand when you have the highest unemployment trend rate in nearly a decade you are exiting from those programs.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for that observation. I am happy to give some context to that. When it comes to the specifics of employment programs, it is very clear that it is a federal government responsibility as evidenced by the fact that no other state—

Mr MULHERIN: But isn't immigration a federal responsibility, too?

Mr LANGBROEK: Well, that is the whole point. Skilled and business migration is something that is part of my portfolio. It is a designated part, whereas I understand it in the past—

Mr MULHERIN: So is employment.

Mr LANGBROEK: We are doing the employment programs as part of our message to say that we want to make sure that schools and training and early childhood are focused on making sure that people get jobs. We always work with the federal government, whether it is on migration issues—and I have met with Minister Bowen about visa issues that have restricted the types of training we were able to provide because we had too many people getting permanent residency. It led to a real spike in over 300,000 people a few years ago. Now we are passing on from the states that that is a real problem for our TAFEs especially because of the restrictions that have now been lifted for universities because of the Knight review and the other review by Bruce Baird. We need the federal government to understand the consequences of their action, but we also need them to understand the consequences of their responsibility. What had happened was we were taking their responsibility in employment. They now need to live up to their responsibility. Whereas in migration we are saying that, if they are taking care of the whole country in terms of migration, they need to be making sure that we are getting over one per cent of the visas that we are currently getting.

Mr MULHERIN: Long-term unemployment has impacts on the health system, housing and all that. Surely you have a responsibility there. Can't you see the contradiction? On the one hand you are saying that immigration is a responsibility of the Commonwealth but we are going to play in that space, but on the other hand with regard to employment programs, which Deloitte's say in its report have an economic advantage to Queensland, you are abdicating your responsibilities.

Mr LANGBROEK: Once again, I am happy to take that as a comment. I am also happy to table for the committee the advice of Skilling Queenslanders for Work Initiative 2007-12 funding and active contracts by electorate. It has all the electorates including the honourable member's own electorate in Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Does that include ones that you have cancelled as well?

Mr LANGBROEK: We are living up to all the contracts we signed. I am happy to table that, and I seek leave to table that. Every member's electorate in the parliament is represented. I seek leave to table, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr MULHERIN: While we are on the subject of skilled migration, do you think having programs to assist unemployed people into employment programs is beneficial to the state?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not going to give you an opinion, because I think asking for an opinion is something that is not my job to do here today. If you have a specific question about an employment program or something we have ceased, I am happy to answer it.

Mr MULHERIN: I thought that as employment is an area of your responsibility you would be doing everything you could to get unemployed people into the workforce.

Mr LANGBROEK: And we are.

Mr MULHERIN: By slashing programs?

Mr LANGBROEK: We are absolutely focusing on the areas that we campaigned on at the election. We are making sure that we looking at our whole training system to ensure we have good representation with what industry is saying they want but also to make sure there are pathways for people to get the skills that they need to upskill, reskill or retrain so that we can get to a four per cent unemployment target by 2018. We are focusing on the four pillars but, as I said at a number of TAFEs this week—in Mackay, in fact, in your electorate and in Rockhampton and Gladstone with the assistant minister—TAFE itself needs to be reformed. The people within it know it. I can advise members of the committee that the highest utilisation rate is at the Southbank Institute of Technology and it is just over 40 per cent or in the forties. We do not have enough utilisation of our facilities. We need to make sure they are better utilised; that they engage with industry so we can get people getting the jobs they need from having been reskilled.

Mr MULHERIN: To turn back to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Initiative and those programs in various electorates, did any government members make representation about these programs?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Yes, I have had significant representation. It is exactly what I would expect members to do. In fact, as I look around I believe that every member of this committee has made representations to me about particular programs that they are personally aware of. They are passionate people. As I have already explained to the committee this morning, we had difficult decisions that we had to make. We came to power to find the state in a parlous financial situation. I have been through this, Madam Chair, this morning but I am happy to do it again and to point out that in Queensland debt was spiralling out of control. We accept the Deloitte Access Economics findings that the Skilling Queenslanders for Work Initiative was very successful, but, as I have said, the federal government is responsible for assisting job seekers.

We are saving \$53.8 million this financial year as we wind down the program, but any contracts that have been let will be continued. It is important that the federal government is taking back more of its role in helping disadvantaged job seekers into employment. We have also begun work to ensure that every part of the government is focused on creating jobs in the private sector. As I have said, all of these members in front of me have made representations, especially as passionate new members of parliament, and that is exactly what I would expect them to do. We have had to sit down with them and with those organisations to say, 'We don't want you to lose your intellectual capacity. We want to work with you in potentially different ways to deliver the services that you have been delivering.' It really comes back to the thrust of what I have said before: employment programs are a federal responsibility.

Mr MULHERIN: So is migration.

Mr LANGBROEK: Skilled and business migration have a place in a strong state economy.

Mr MULHERIN: As do people working make a huge contribution to the economy, Minister. I have a question for the director-general. Director-General, can you explain the role of the Training Ombudsman?

Ms Grantham: Yes. The Training Ombudsman's role was reviewed some years ago by the Webbe and Weller review, which you will recall under the previous government. At that time that role was recommended to be abolished. In reviewing the department and the strategies in order to deliver our budget savings, we again looked at that review, looked at what the Training Ombudsman does and then proceeded to recommend that that position be abolished.

That does not mean that the functions of the Training Ombudsman will be lost. The functions include providing independent review and resolution of complaints from apprentices, trainees, employers and other interested parties. All of that will still continue. The process will be either through QCAT, or the Industrial Relations Commission or it will be through a function that our department has now established in order to accept complaints. Certainly it is not about valuing the role that the Training

Ombudsman had carried out. This is about looking at how the job can be done and in what way we can achieve the outcomes that we need to have achieved through that role. We believe that was a duplication and other mechanisms existed for the Training Ombudsman role to still proceed but in a different methodology.

Mr MULHERIN: You said that it was a recommendation from the Webbe-Weller review. Not all recommendations of the Webbe-Weller review were implemented by the previous government. My understanding of the Training Ombudsman was that one of the recommendations that the government did not accept—

Ms Grantham: I did not mean to imply that. I was simply referring to the fact that it had been identified in that review.

Mr MULHERIN: The previous government did not accept that recommendation. I just wanted to make that clear.

Ms Grantham: Yes. It was under discussion through the department at that time. I was not in the department at that time, so I am not sure what the position was in terms of the bureaucratic response. I can say that when we were looking at all the functions that exist in the department and the associated functions that are carried out by other people, other functions and statutory authorities, this was one that we knew had been identified. So we continued on that line of investigation about the functions, processes and other capacity that already existed that could still deal with the functions as they existed. It was that background that led to that decision.

Mr MULHERIN: How many contacts with apprentices, trainees and employers did the Ombudsman have in the last financial year?

Ms Grantham: In 2011-12 the Training Ombudsman reviewed a total of 45 formal complaints. Of those complaints, 41 were resolved, four are still under investigation and one was referred to TERC.

Mr MULHERIN: Do you have any figures on how many contacts with apprentices, trainees and employers the Ombudsman had in that last year rather than resolving issues?

Ms Grantham: No, I have not.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I ask the member are you meaning how many people were involved in those 45 complaints?

Mr MULHERIN: The Office of the Ombudsman—not with complaints, but having contacts with apprentices, trainees and employers?

Ms Grantham: The others I gave you were formal complaints. The other informal numbered 386 in 2010-11 and 357 in 2011-12.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I advise that we have developed a fact sheet on complaints and appeals. So we are making sure that, while there are other arrangements of which the director-general has advised the committee, people know about the fact that they do have rights. The last thing we want to hear as a government is that people who have got problems with training say that they did not have any recourse. That is something that we would not want to hear.

Mr MULHERIN: What was the budget of the Training Ombudsman's office?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. The function of the Ombudsman, which we have said could be reintegrated with the complaints process within my department will save approximately—

Mr MULHERIN: With all due respect, Minister, I heard that. However, the specific question was to the director-general.

Mr LANGBROEK: Sure.

Mr MULHERIN: What was the budget of the Office of the Training Ombudsman?

Ms Grantham: The actual budget in 2011-12 was \$394,000.

Mr MULHERIN: We have about 100,000 apprentices or trainees throughout the state?

Ms Grantham: Or is it 80,000?

Mr MULHERIN: Trainees and apprentices

Ms Grantham: It could be around 100,000.

Mr MULHERIN: That is an investment of around \$3.93 per apprentice.

Mr LANGBROEK: Presuming that every one of them would complain about their course and guess what, they did not.

Mr MULHERIN: Overseeing—

Mr LANGBROEK: We have other mechanisms to do it and I take the point. We can also divide the debt of \$85 billion into 4½ million Queenslanders and get 20,000 bucks a head.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you previously indicated the process by which people will be able to take complaints forward—employers, apprentices and trainees. There is a function within the department. Is that the first step, or is it straight to QCAT or straight to the Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. As has already been made clear by the director-general, there are alternative complaint and appeal mechanisms. That is why we are going to have a fact sheet to make sure that people who are potentially vulnerable—

Mr MULHERIN: What will be the steps?

Mr LANGBROEK:—will know what their rights are, and that is very important. It does depend on the complaint and that is exemplified by the statistics that show that there were a number of complaints to the Training Ombudsman which were not always progressed. We will make sure that apprentices and trainees are aware of their rights and then, should it be decided that it needs to go to the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission or QCAT, that would be something that would be decided by my department which will be making sure we communicate with our apprentices and trainees.

Mr MULHERIN: Is locating the functions within the department not a bit like Caesar judging Caesar?

Ms Grantham: That exists now. It is no different to some of the complaints that come in now. So a similar situation—

Mr MULHERIN: So it will not be—

Ms Grantham: No.

Mr MULHERIN:—handling a different level of complaints?

Ms Grantham: If you can think through, the apprenticeships and traineeships are outside the department; they are with employers. We fund the employers to have the apprentice trained. We are an independent umpire in this case. We want the best and we want the results for apprentices and trainees to be proper and appropriate for them and we want them to have the proper training. It is not us delivering the training; it is the employer, who uses their funding to select a trainer of their choice. It is not the TAFE section of the department—

Mr MULHERIN: No, I realise that.

Ms Grantham:—that is doing that investigation; it is actually a separate compliance unit within the department that would be looking at that.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, did you have any discussions with industry groups prior to making that decision?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is another one of those decisions that was brought to me by the department. I certainly took the advice that the Weller review had recommended the position be removed, making sure that we had the reassurances that the functions of the Training Ombudsman would be replicated within our department. I may have had casual discussions with various people in different industries but, importantly, I also followed the same process of advising the Training Ombudsman once it had been decided that the position would not be continued in line with the previous government's review. As you have pointed out, some of those recommendations have not been carried out. In this case we elected to do so given the state of fiscal repair that we needed to address.

Mr MULHERIN: Prior to the budget preparation, the CBRC process, you did have discussions with industry leaders—

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question.

Mr MULHERIN:—about the role of the Ombudsman?

Mr LANGBROEK: To my recollection no formal discussions were had about that particular position. As I recall, it was presented to me as part of a raft of savings that again had been recommended through a review of the former government. I decided that this would be something that we would be doing to save \$400,000.

Mr MULHERIN: Did you speak to any apprentices in relation to the role of the Ombudsman or what their views were? If you had informal discussions with industry, did you have any formal discussions with apprentices?

Mr LANGBROEK: I certainly spoke with a couple of training organisations on the Gold Coast that had been subjected to the review of the Training Ombudsman which was to do with the sports traineeships; concerns were raised by the Ombudsman. I certainly acknowledged his contribution and the contribution of the office in making sure that any potential problems there were identified. In relation to the apprenticeships that were contained within that particular report we wanted to support those people given that the traineeships were found not to be in compliance with departmental requirements.

Mr MULHERIN: Were those training organisations critical of the report that the Ombudsman brought down?

Mr LANGBROEK: They actually acknowledged that they had had a problem with compliance which they would then seek to rectify. Obviously, the blow-out in the total number of people doing those courses were ones that had been brought to the government's attention. I am confident that the process by which the Training Ombudsman identified that particular issue will still be able to be detected by my department and by the other processes that we have made sure are in place.

Mr MULHERIN: That program was closed down at the end?

Mr LANGBROEK: As I understand it, there have been recommendations to ensure that people comply with the paperwork required so we make sure that, if we are handing out government money, there are real jobs at the end of it and that the training packages being provided are appropriate ones.

Mr MULHERIN: Are they based around school based traineeships?

Mr LANGBROEK: As I understand, some of them were. I am happy to provide the detail should the member like that to be placed on notice. I can advise the committee that some were. If the member has any particular questions I am happy to address them.

CHAIR: That draws to a close this period of non-government questions. I now call on the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: Falling demand, increased private provision and fiscal tightening led to the fundamental question of whether we still need a public provider of a VET service in Queensland. Do you see a role for the public provider?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the member for the question. The answer is we want to have very strong support for TAFE as a public provider. The points that the honourable member has made and the questions are ones that have vexed governments over a long time with the changing needs of the training sector. In a state like Queensland with the diverse areas we have, we need to make sure we develop skills throughout Queensland that industry needs and that expand the four-pillar economy of tourism, agriculture, resources and construction.

TAFE is the largest provider of vocational education and training in Queensland, delivering approximately two-thirds of all registered training. We have 11 non-statutory institutes. They liaise with industry and employers to deliver a wide variety of qualifications from certificate 1 to diplomas, advanced diplomas and vocational graduate diplomas across 800 program areas at 88 metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations across the state. Despite challenging market conditions and reduced revenue in 2011-12, TAFE delivered increases in higher level qualifications and apprentice and trainee commencements. The Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce was established to provide advice in June 2012 on improving the operation and outcomes of Queensland's vocational education and training sector, including on the future role and purpose of TAFE. Of course, the interim report came down some time ago with a focus on recommendations to address longstanding issues in the TAFE sector. The report articulates that the role and purpose of TAFE Queensland is to deliver skills and training responsive to industry needs and the Queensland economy and to deliver clearly defined government priorities which cannot otherwise be delivered in a contestable market.

The preliminary findings take an in-depth look at TAFE and how it could be revitalised. The findings will assist the government to assess what action must be taken to grow our four-pillar economy and reduce unemployment. The government is clearly focused on training that meets industry need and delivers real job outcomes, and that is the message that I delivered to our three TAFEs in Gladstone, Mackay and Rockhampton just last week with the Assistant Minister for Technical and Further Education: our strong support for TAFE and making sure we do not make the mistakes that Victoria has made. Honourable members may be aware of some of the issues that have received significant media coverage such as in Victoria where they basically said, 'We'll have a demand driven system. You can train for whatever you want and we will pay for people do it.' Of course, it led to a massive blow-out in the budget in Victoria. Through the Skills and Training Taskforce we are making sure we are getting advice about how TAFE should be provided in the future and how it should be resourced. We are also making sure that we have a sustainable system where we are getting real job outcomes that will help to grow our economy.

Mr BOOTHMAN: What are the current utilisation rates of TAFE campuses?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I did mention this as I was speaking about the Southbank Institute of Technology. This is a significant issue that the interim report of the Skills and Training Taskforce looked at. The utilisation rate, which obviously is how much the place is being used, was found to be very, very low in a number of our TAFEs. As a government, the Newman government is committed to creating an industry-engaged vocational education and training sector to increase completion rates, match training to job outcomes and transform VET investment to support demand driven training. I would like to advise the committee that utilisation rates are not measured in a consistent way across campuses. However, estimates indicate that utilisation on a

Monday-to-Friday basis between the hours of 8 am and 6 pm is, on average, 40 per cent. In many instances there is high utilisation during peak demand times, for example, 9 am to 3 pm with little utilisation across other times. When I have been to other TAFEs such as Gold Coast Institute of TAFE, Metropolitan South Institute of TAFE or Cairns there has obviously been a lack of demand or lack of utilisation in the evenings. Traditionally, many people used to undertake TAFE courses at night.

We do not believe that is an efficient use of our capital investment. We need to have some new approaches to ensure we have maximum use of facilities. Redirecting excess investment to the quality of resources and teaching will deliver better outcomes. That is the message I gave to many of our great TAFE teachers and administrators last week along with the assistant minister; that is, we want to reinvigorate their sector and give them a new lease on life as educators.

We have over 3,000 TAFE teachers in our sector, and we do value them. We know that if we left it all to the private market there would be lots of parts of Queensland where no-one would go to provide training. I reiterate the government's support for the recommendation that we ensure we have an asset management strategy, and we will put in place other strategies to increase utilisation and to improve the quality of delivery through TAFE across the state.

Many of the facilities are very old. We have heard references today to the age of schools. Many of our facilities need to be looked at in terms of their age. It is one of the strategies that will be used, especially given that some of them have been affected by the floods and are not being used. Surely it makes sense to have an asset management plan. It is an indictment on the former government that it refused to do so.

Mr LATTER: Minister, I draw your attention back to the Skills and Training Taskforce interim report. The main recommendation of that interim report was that a number of TAFE sites be closed down. Can you please outline the current infrastructure footprint of TAFE?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. This is a significant question which I think we should take some time to go through, because there are a number of statistics that are very relevant. Of course, the last thing we want is to have people worried about what we are going to do, when I have just given as much reassurance as I can to TAFE workers, teachers, administrators and students. Last week in Rockhampton, the last thing Saxon Rice and I wanted to do was create any uncertainty about whether there will be TAFE training in the Rockhampton area following the potential merger that we have supported in principle. I will come to some of that later.

I firstly note for the committee's consideration that the interim report is just that: it is an interim report. It makes a number of recommendations, none of which the government has responded to yet. When it comes to the infrastructure footprint, TAFE Queensland consists of 11 non-statutory and two statutory TAFE institutes across 95 campuses. The CEOs of the two statutory institutes—the Gold Coast and South Bank—are here. The estimated book value of the TAFE asset portfolio in Queensland is approximately \$1.4 billion. Of the 95 locations, 64 sites are owned by the state of Queensland, with the remaining 31 sites being occupied under a variety of tenancy agreements, leases and memorandums of understanding. As I have mentioned, not all of these locations currently conduct training to students. Of the 95 locations across Queensland, 13 sites consist of vacant lands, unoccupied properties, support service facilities or facilities presently under construction.

In reference to the member's question about capital works, in 2012-13 there is \$57.626 million in capital works project funds for TAFE Queensland institutes, including \$28.031 million to develop a major trade training centre at the Central Queensland University Mackay campus, which I saw last week. We are having discussions with the Minister for Energy and Water Supply about ensuring there is enough energy supplied to that when it is due to be finished. TAFE Queensland institutes supported by the department have also participated with university partners in the Australian government's Education Investment Fund and Structural Adjustment Fund, where Queensland universities were successful in obtaining a total of \$146.7 million in funding. Honourable members can see from that that there is a considerable amount of money involved.

We have the Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE trying to apply for some of that SAF funding for a project they want to do at Dalby. The TAFE at Gladstone is trying to get some of the funding for the LNG-CSG project they would like to do with industry support. And there are a number of university and TAFE partnerships—Structural Adjustment Fund partnerships—where we are getting institutes with access to new educational facilities. In other words, if you go to TAFE we would like you to consider, once you have done your diploma or certificate, maybe getting a degree and complete upskilling—or vice versa. If you are at university, you may choose to do a graduate diploma in something instead of an MBA. We want to give people choice and diversity. Those partnerships we are speaking about are at Sippy Downs, the Sunshine Coast Institute of TAFE, with a health and allied health building; Gympie, the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE, with health and allied health; Central Queensland Institute of TAFE through the dual-sector amalgamation with Central Queensland University; and then of course various regional centres, where the University of Southern Queensland is proposing the development of a multisector collaboration, and of course QTEPNet, which will provide support to students studying USQ's online offerings through TAFE Queensland.

Before I finish, I would like the director-general, who is a representative on the Skills and Training Taskforce, to particularly address a couple of the other issues. I highlight the fact that this is just an interim report but we are considering it for the good of all Queenslanders.

Ms Grantham: For the committee's information, the final meeting of the Skills and Training Taskforce will be this Friday. It is culminating in a six-hour meeting to try to meet our deadlines. It is a great commitment from not only the public servants, that are few on that committee, but also the representatives from industry, who have really engaged in what we see as a great opportunity to reform VET in Queensland of which, of course, TAFE is one aspect.

In the task force's consideration, the first couple of meetings did focus on the public provider. Earlier you touched on the question of whether there should be a public provider. It was strongly endorsed by the committee that the public provider plays a very important role, not only in areas of market failure but also right across Queensland, to provide quality training in the vocational education and training landscape.

Some of the things we looked at—the minister referred to the first interim report—were about TAFE in particular. We firstly answered the question about the role of the public provider, but we then looked at the funding model to provide a sustainable future for our TAFEs so that they could be assured that how they were funded into the future gave them the opportunity to be competitive in the public market. We looked at how they actually could contest funding. So if they are given a base of funding to operate, what did it then look like in a competitive market with private providers? And we looked at how we fund training to ensure the Queensland economy is being supported and that the direction of the government spend would ultimately resolve into a great outcome for the Queensland economy.

We looked at industrial awards—how people in the public provider space work in that and how we ensure there is competitive opportunity for those people to deliver training in competition. We looked at the footprint, as the minister has said. He gave some statistics about the public provider and the footprint. I think you will realise from what he was saying about the number of campuses and the unoccupied campus that we have a considerable challenge there. We have also talked about the opportunities for TAFEs to take a lead in particular areas of industry that will support the Queensland economy.

The task force has been very wide ranging. We are looking at industry engagement at the moment. We are also looking at apprenticeship and traineeship reform. So there has been a great commitment from the members of the task force. Certainly I am very confident that the final report that will be delivered to the minister will give a real blueprint for vocational education and training into the future for Queensland in a very sustainable way.

Mr PUCCI: Minister, how is the government reducing red tape and other barriers to attract new apprentices?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, this is something we have been speaking about all day—our commitment to growing a four-pillar economy focusing on resources, construction, agriculture and tourism so that we can reduce unemployment in Queensland to four per cent over the next six years.

As I have already said, strengthening our vocational education and training sector is a key part of delivering on those commitments and ensuring training leads to skills to deliver growth in employment and productivity. The Newman government is providing up to \$86 million over the next six years to support the employment of 10,000 additional apprentices. The Skills and Training Taskforce will provide advice and make recommendations on the actions needed to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland's VET sector and achieve the target of 10,000 places.

The task force has also considered the impact of the current regulatory framework—we have already heard from the director-general about that—and reducing red tape for employers wishing to hire new apprentices and trainees. Subject to the findings of the task force, the TAFEs are likely to play a critical role in ensuring individuals have access to a training place in areas where fully contestable markets are less likely to deliver an optimal solution.

We need to remove the barriers created for employers to hire new apprentices and trainees by improving alignment of skills outcomes with jobs through a demand driven training system. The client, the employer, who is providing the students, may say, 'I cannot release my workers for block training.' At Rockhampton last week, the director of the particular campus said, 'We have modified what we are providing for employers because we know that it is impractical for employers, who say, "I cannot release my apprentices." Therefore, we have to be more flexible.' They have done that very adroitly in Rockhampton, and I know they are doing it in other places as well.

Employers have been saying, 'We need training that will fit what we need for our workers so that we can keep them working.' This includes the flexibility of, at times, doing some theoretical training when they do not have jobs on the go. But we cannot get too far ahead in the theory because apprentices need to be out there doing practical work as well. The important thing is not to say, as may have happened in the past—a long time in the past—'There's our course. Take it or leave it.' People in increasing numbers were saying, 'Well, I am going to find someone else who wants to meet my needs.'

Our commitment has been to an industry led engagement model, making sure that people who want to be with us in TAFE are there to provide training and have that flexibility. Some of them—as anyone would be in a situation like that—are fearful about change and what it might lead to. Especially last week in those campuses that the assistant minister and I visited, we were reassuring people that we believe that the merger with Central Queensland University will lead, especially in that particular area—a dual sector in Central Queensland—to a merger of the aspects that skills and training can give you along with the more theoretical components of a university.

Everywhere we went we met community representatives who were keen to see the merger happen. Our workers in TAFE felt like they had been left out of the discussion because there had been significant media conducted by the university. Because the decision had been held in abeyance by the former government and then we had an election, I can understand that our TAFE teachers and administrators were concerned about what was going to happen to them. We wanted to reassure them that reforming Queensland's VET sector is fundamental to growing our economy and reducing unemployment to four per cent within six years.

CHAIR: That brings to a close the government questions. I now call on the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, can you outline any major investigations where the Training Ombudsman has achieved a good outcome for a large number of apprentices and trainees or has given good advice to government about how some of the private training providers are performing or given advice around whether to suspend programs because they are not really linked in to job opportunities?

Mr LANGBROEK: Certainly. I thank the honourable member for the question. This is something that I started to address towards the conclusion of the member's last group of questions. In June 2012 the Training Ombudsman completed a review of school based traineeships in sport and recreation. There was a massive increase—I think over 170 per cent—in the number of students who were doing these traineeships. The ombudsman's report identified widespread practices that were in breach of the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act.

The main issue was that it was not leading to real jobs, as I have said before to the committee. It was, 'The failure to ensure that suitable employment arrangements are in place prior to the commencement of a contract.' The main issue, though, having advised the training Ombudsman that we were confident that we could deliver the services that he was providing through our department and through other means, was to make sure that, prior to the Ombudsman ceasing work—and that is, as I understand, still some weeks away—he would commit to making sure that many of his practices were passed on to us. So, still being an employee of our department, it would be appreciated if there were things that he could make sure that he leaves with us to make sure that we do as much as we can to make sure we are providing the services that he was providing. Once again, no-one was questioning that it was not a service that was of some value. It had been identified by a former review that it should be removed. So we are now saying that we are saving this \$400,000 by not having the position.

Mr MULHERIN: So you are showing him the door and doing a brain dump. Can you advise what was the cost of that program that was suspended around those school based apprenticeships?

Mr LANGBROEK: I note the numbers have increased in terms of the number of trainees who had been doing it. I am happy to take that on notice, as I am certainly happy to come back to the value. The number of school based trainees in the sport and recreation industry increased by 350 per cent—so a significant increase from 2007 to 2011. The number of active school based apprenticeships and trainees in Queensland as of 30 July 2012 is 10,745. There are 2,460 apprentices and 8,285 trainees. Of the 8,285 trainees, 1,687 are in a sport and recreation qualification. Once again, in Victoria, sport and recreation is one of the areas of strong growth that is causing concern in Victoria.

Can I finish by saying that I do not think it is unreasonable for us to say that to a public servant, especially one still in our employ. Are we seriously suggesting that they are not going to tell us what they know or the things that they have been doing to supposedly help the government simply because their position is being terminated? I reject that the Ombudsman would be doing that. As I say, I have specifically asked him to make sure that he passes on any or all information that may be of value to us as a government in making sure that we have the best use of taxpayers' funds, including the funds that were actually for his department or for his section of our department.

Mr MULHERIN: Did the Ombudsman have any involvement in the transition of registered nursing students who studied at the Shafston institute of technology to the TAFE system after Shafston lost its accreditation and thereby the recognition of the qualifications of its students?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. For the newer members of the committee, I can advise that, whilst I remember hearing about that case through the media in either the 51st Parliament or the 52nd Parliament—and I am happy to give those details on notice—it was of significant media interest. I can advise the committee that the answer is no—that that particular issue you are raising was not something into which the Ombudsman had any input.

Mr MULHERIN: With the new structure that is coming with the department having some functions, the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission and QCAT, who will be someone who is independent who is overseeing the performance of training providers like an Ombudsman to ensure that

they are providing what they are supposed to be providing? We have seen some recent criticisms by parents and apprentices and trainees around the level of training. Who will carry out that independent watchdog role that the Ombudsman currently provides to government?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. Of course, it is something that we should all be concerned about, because the training Ombudsman was doing those roles that the honourable member has just pointed out. We are committed to making sure that we provide a similar level of scrutiny and analysis to what the training Ombudsman has been doing up until now. So via that fact sheet, we will make sure, engaging with the overarching Ombudsman that is part of our public processes, that we will work with ASQA as well—the Australian Skills Quality Authority—which has just been set up and to which we have devolved our powers to the Australian government. I have also made the point that I do not want to have parents coming to me, or people involved in training, questioning the qualities of the RTOs and/or the traineeships or the apprenticeships that they are being provided. That means there is ASQA, the Ombudsman plus the other processes in our department. When I have had people express concerns to me about how long it might take for an RTO to be registered—because that all went on hold while we considered referring our legislation—I have spoken to the commissioner Chris Robinson here in parliament. He is based here in Brisbane. I think another commissioner is Michael Lavarch. We are making sure that our departmental workers—the ones who I said some time ago in an answer were saving us \$3 million and of whom many are going to be in that department—will work with them. The last thing we want is anyone being provided a service being told, ‘I am sorry, that’s a federal government jurisdiction. We can’t help you.’ We will not have that. The Premier does not want it. It is that silo that he wants to get rid of. My department will be made aware that if there is a complaint about an RTO or a traineeship, that we are going to get them a response. We will not just be fobbing them off.

Mr MULHERIN: So there will not be anyone who is in a position to carry out an independent report on a performance—like a watchdog’s role—to the Queensland government. You will be relying on third parties—Commonwealth government agencies such as the Australian skills quality complaints commission—is that what it is?

Mr LANGBROEK: The Australian Skills Quality Authority.

Mr MULHERIN: The quality authority.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes. But the important thing is that, remember—

Mr MULHERIN: So that will become the Ombudsman for the state?

Mr LANGBROEK: We have other processes before someone would go to ASQA. That is the whole point about making sure that, before we have removed this particular job, this particular position, as we have said, that the jobs being carried out by that person can and will be carried out. So whether it is the Industrial Relations Commission—and I do not think anyone is going to question whether QCAT may be an independent authority, but we have people who might be able to appeal to QCAT; they might be able to appeal against a decision that was made. Complaints about a registered training organisation, as the national regulator, will go to the Australian Skills Quality Authority. ASQA regulates courses and training providers to ensure that nationally approved quality standards are met.

If the honourable member is making assertions that perhaps there will be less regulation, or less monitoring of courses and complaints, I reject that out of hand. We will make sure that we liaise with ASQA to make sure that the Brisbane based commissioner and his staff act on complaints that anyone in Queensland may have about the training that they are receiving from any provider.

Mr MULHERIN: So there will not be an independent watchdog reporting to you, Minister, into the further—

Mr LANGBROEK: I can confirm that there is an independent authority. It is called the Australian Skills Quality Authority.

Mr MULHERIN: But does that report to you?

Mr LANGBROEK: They will certainly be aware of the fact that we have an interest—

Mr MULHERIN: But it does not report to you directly?

Mr LANGBROEK: The training compliance unit, which is within my department, may review complaints about prequalified supplier behaviour under the User Choice 2010-2015 policy.

Mr MULHERIN: But that is not independent of the department.

Mr LANGBROEK: I can tell you the officers in my department do not have a vested interest in protecting a training provider. They take the attitude of providing frank and fearless advice in saying, ‘We will assess the complaint when it is made by someone who is unhappy about their training course.’ Following that, if there is an issue, they could then go, of course, to all of those other avenues that I have already mentioned.

Mr MULHERIN: Just getting back to school based apprenticeships or traineeships in sport and recreation, was the department aware of those issues prior to the Ombudsman's report, or did the Ombudsman discover the inadequacies of that program?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am advised that the answer is yes, the department was advised and referred it to the training Ombudsman for investigation.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, recently you have given an assurance that you support the merger of the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE with Central Queensland University to form a dual-sector university. I commend you for supporting that, because that is what the people in the Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaacs region and the Rockhampton-Fitzroy region and the Bundaberg region want in relation to having a facility where you could have lifelong learning, as you pointed out, where people can transition from the vocational sector through to the tertiary sector. The federal government minister, Minister Crean, said in Rockhampton some time ago that, if the merger went ahead, there would be up to \$70 million in funding that could be provided to the university. Could you or your director-general advise of the current status of the discussions with the university and the TAFE sector, when the merger is likely to happen and will it meet the time line for those federal government programs?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. That is obviously exactly the trip that I did last week with the assistant minister to Mackay, Gladstone and Rockhampton—to speak about these issues. I have already canvassed some of those details quite specifically about the concerns of those local people. You are right: in fact, part of the catalyst for the enthusiasm in those regions in Central Queensland has been this promised revenue of over \$70 million from the federal government. As I understand it, we have had reassurances from the federal government that we had to do due diligence on the actual process, because the federal government would be contributing about \$73 million in infrastructure. I think a lot of that is going to happen in Mackay, but those details are ones that I think are quite public. That is coming from the Structural Adjustment/Education Investment Fund. The Queensland government will be contributing about \$116 million in assets by putting them into the merger. That is not insignificant. Of course, the ongoing amount in training that we purchase is \$37 million. So, yes, there is a federal contribution of \$73 million, but next year alone \$150 million would be the contribution for the merger.

In terms of the time frames, though, having done those road trips my department, with CQU, is working to make sure that, as you said, the region wants it. But many of the people who want it like the vibe, can I suggest, to the honourable member and the committee. They like the idea, the concept. What we are tasked with as a government is making sure that the vibe translates into real outcomes that do not leave us holding the baby if some of the projections do not work. That, as we have already heard today in education and training, can be something that is a lot harder to deliver than to make the promises. That is why we are not making any apologies for being very diligent about putting together both of these institutions—our training system and Central Queensland University—and coming to an agreement. If we are handing over those resources, we want to make sure it works.

The time frame is that I think by the end of November we are looking to finalise the agreement with a potential start date of January 2014. I was with the acting deputy director-general at those forums—and I should, of course, be able to answer this, having heard it three times in two days last week—but the important thing was that we are having consultation with the staff and unions. We are meeting with the senior executives of Central Queensland University to progress the negotiations. We are continuing to engage with the stakeholders. We went to the election, most importantly can I tell the committee, promising Central Queenslanders that we would resolve this issue sooner rather than later. I am proud to say that we have delivered this but, most importantly, one thing that our side of the parliament will never resile from is making sure that the finances are correct. For that I think it is obvious that, yes, there is \$73.8 million from the federal government, but balance that up against the potential jobs for those people in Central Queensland in all of those diverse campuses and the money that we are putting in from the Queensland government. It means that we have to make sure that we do it diligently. That is what we are committed to doing. I am not sure if the Director-General would like to add anything there.

Ms Grantham: I think you have covered that answer very well, Minister. Just to clarify, Queensland government assets are \$116.9, which the minister said. The funding is \$39.8 million. The minister said \$37 million. But the assets plus the training that we purchased is a significant investment.

Mr MULHERIN: It is the assets of Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay and Emerald, is that right?

Mr LANGBROEK: Biloela.

Ms Grantham: Not Bundaberg.

Mr LANGBROEK: Bundaberg is in the Wide Bay campus.

Mr MULHERIN: I am thinking of that CQ campus footprint.

Mr LANGBROEK: The Bundaberg issue is something that is being considered by the Skills and Training Taskforce as well.

Mr MULHERIN: That is not likely to be part of the merger?

Mr LANGBROEK: There are no plans at the moment. But as I say, we will look at the report from the Skills and Training Taskforce. The member for Bundaberg, the Minister for Police and Community Safety, has certainly made representations to me about some of his concerns about the lack of some courses being provided in Bundaberg. Importantly, we need to do this in a structured, planned way and at the moment those campuses that the honourable member mentioned—Mackay, Rockhampton, Gladstone, Biloela and Emerald—were the ones that we certainly spoke to either by teleconference or direct at three conferences that we had last week.

Mr MULHERIN: If the merger goes ahead with the new entity how will the disposal of assets be treated into the future?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. That is exactly the arrangements that we are now sorting out at the contractual level. One thing that we cannot allow when we are just handing over—not handing over—assets is for suddenly someone to say ‘I do not think we need these any more’ and sell them off. That is exactly what I was reassuring specifically those TAFE workers in Rockhampton about. I can see the member for Rockhampton acknowledging the concerns of those workers in the Rockhampton TAFE. I made the point at that forum that this is not a takeover. It is very important to acknowledge that. Some of our TAFE workers have felt this is a takeover. It is not a takeover in the business sense of a larger business subsuming a smaller business who then says ‘what are we replicating or duplicating in this business?’ therefore ‘what is surplus to our requirements?’ That is not the case. This is a merger and we need to make sure there are safeguards in place for the government’s assets that we are distributing.

Mr MULHERIN: So there would be sunset clauses around the disposal of assets and industrial relations agreements between the different entities if there was a merged entity; is that what you are saying?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question and advise that that, yes, that is exactly the sort of arrangements. I have not yet seen the finalised contractual agreements. I note the Acting Deputy Director-General of Training is certainly reassuring me, whenever I seek the reassurances, that we are making sure there are significant safeguards in there about those specific issues. We will not be signing off on anything that enables someone to have the significant assets of the Queensland government and then say, ‘Now we are going to dispose of it.’

I can advise that there are statutory covenants and a legislative power to direct. So there will be legislative power given to me as the minister, or whoever is the minister, with those covenants as well to make sure that there can be direction to the vice-chancellor of the institution. Normally that would not necessarily be the case. A vice-chancellor might be inclined to listen to the minister, but if there is a statutory covenant and a legislative direction that you can use then that will be the case.

Mr MULHERIN: Does that legislative direction apply to other universities or will it be a legislative direction for a period of time, i.e. 10 years?

Mr LANGBROEK: It is a specific power, as I understand. As we are amending two acts, the Central Queensland University Act and the Vocational Education, Training and Employment Act they are things that we will be putting into those specific arrangements. As to the details of sunset clauses, I am happy to advise the member closer to the time of them coming into the parliament. At the moment our department is still at the stage of negotiating with the Central Queensland University about the detail which, of course, then will become codified into legislation.

Mr MULHERIN: I have more questions, but I can come back to them if my time is up.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Mackay. I will now call on the member for Lytton.

Mr SYMES: Minister, how will the Supporting Women Scholarships help to address the skills shortages in Queensland?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. That is once again another election promise that we have announced, the scholarships for women in traditionally male dominated professions. Before I come to those particular sponsorships, I can now give the committee, and the honourable member for Mackay who asked me about the numerical value, the quantum of the investment in sport and rec school based traineeships. I can advise that in 2009-10 it was \$1.04 million, in 2010-11 it was \$1.4 million and by 2011-12 \$3.8 million was being spent on these traineeships. My department became aware of that information and referred it to the training Ombudsman.

Mr MULHERIN: So over \$3 million worth of investment.

Mr LANGBROEK: It had gone up 370 per cent. The quantum shows that is exactly what happened, from \$1.04 to \$3.8 million and that is what attracted attention.

Mr MULHERIN: Just in one program. By abolishing the position, a saving of \$393,000, with potential savings of \$3 million.

Mr LANGBROEK: I have already made the point that we have arrangements in place. If our department detected it then they will detect it now and we have the process to track down what was happening and make sure that appropriate action happens.

I come back now to the Supporting Women Scholarships question. A selection committee to oversee the Supporting Women Scholarships program was announced on 4 June by the Premier and myself. Scholarships are for women who are interested in pursuing study and employment in traditionally male dominated fields and skills shortage areas. The \$10 million Supporting Women Scholarships program will fund 500 scholarships of up to \$20,000 over four years. This is for study in targeted male dominated fields experiencing skills shortages such as engineering, agricultural science, geology, architecture, building services and information technology, from certificate IV level to postgraduate. Women at all stages of their lives and careers are eligible to apply, including young women leaving school, women changing careers, and women returning to study and employment. Applications closed on 12 October 2012 for scholarships commencing at the beginning of the 2013 academic year. I am pleased to announce that 368 applications were received. Members will remember it is 500 scholarships over four years but we have had 368 applications so that is certainly very promising. The recipients will be notified by December 2012. Students will still need to win a place in an eligible course using the QTAC, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, process or by applying directly to a registered training organisation.

I have certainly had feedback from a number of people who attended those sessions that I was proud to present down at the Stamford. Young people were looking at this as an opportunity to get some assistance. We all know how students are doing it tough and always do it tough and that is why we are happy to support the scholarship program as a part of us coming to our four per cent unemployment target and also diversifying skills training and education in Queensland.

CHAIR: The minister has addressed this to a certain extent, but could the minister please update us on the progress of the trade training centre in Mackay?

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the honourable member for the question. I only dealt with this very cursorily. I mentioned that I had been there. It is a significant issue and I know it is an important issue for the member for Mackay but, of course, many people in the Central Queensland region so I thank you for the question. The new \$40.6 million school and TAFE training centre at Ooralea in Mackay is scheduled to be completed and ready to occupy in May 2013. They were certainly pleased to have a ministerial visit last week. It is an impressive building. The school trade training centre is scheduled to be completed in early December. It was interesting to travel there, having met with the new mayor Deirdre Comerford at regional community cabinet in Proserpine about two months before. For us to get out there as ministers and members of parliament is really the most valuable thing that we can do. We can have briefings about all of these matters and sit here and describe them. Two days before I met with Minister McArdle about the electricity issue because there are significant problems there. Mayor Comerford had mentioned to me that there were issues with providing electricity. They tried to have this resolved some time ago and had no response. I went to Minister McArdle's office to talk about whether there will be enough electricity for the school centre as well so that they can be occupying it and working. The total power requirement is over 3,000 kVAs and Ergon have indicated it is only able to supply approximately a quarter of this amount. That is only sufficient for the school trade training centre. At this stage Ergon have advised the remainder of the power supply will only be available once Ergon's new substation at Ooralea is completed in 2015. Practical completion for this project is due 9 May 2013. To overcome the school and TAFE training centre power supply problems there have been various options, including providing temporary power by means of diesel generators at a cost of something like \$6,000 a day or a staged occupancy of the new facility by TAFE. These options have been investigated but they are either cost prohibitive, as I have pointed out, or would result in extensive delays. Having the new TAFE trade training centre completed but unoccupied for approximately two years is unacceptable and as a result DETE is seeking Ergon's assistance to urgently accelerate its Ooralea substation delivery program. I am the first to acknowledge it is easy for us to sit here and say a new substation should be delivered. I am not aware of why it happened as it has happened, but a new substation is something that can cost up to \$25 million and it has been pointed out to me by the energy minister—and I am not reflecting on this particular council—that sometimes when councils say 'This is our forward planning and we were going to put substations here or there' and then subsequently they allow developments to happen in other areas—guess what?—people say 'I need a new substation.' That has a significant impact on Ergon's ability to provide it in the appropriate time. As I have said, I have met with the energy minister to discuss this issue. We are doing everything in our power that we can to resolve this issue as soon as possible. I look forward to seeing the progress of the trade training centre and, of course, the school trade training centre that is nearby as well.

CHAIR: I call on the member for Burnett?

Mr BENNETT: Minister, how does the state's VET sector's stated priorities align with the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question because it is so important that we acknowledge that the Queensland government is doing so much in this sector but that there is also a national skills reform agenda. The federal government is also saying it wants greater choice and competition in the training sector. The federal minister, Minister Evans, has said we need to make the training system more responsive to the needs of industry and students. Under the agreement with the Australian government, Queensland is committed to developing a Queensland Training Guarantee. It is likely to make a greater proportion of government funding contestable and more accessible to Queenslanders through both TAFE and private training organisations delivering highly responsive training that meets the needs of students, employers and industry. A demand led vocational education and training system is well advanced in Queensland due to the User Choice program. The Director-General referred to the fact that we have people who are able to choose what they want to do with User Choice which is our apprenticeship funding.

User choice is demand led, fully contestable and it provides funds for the training of apprentices and trainees. As we have mentioned a number of times today, the government has also established the Skills and Training Taskforce to provide advice on the actions needed to improve the operations and outcomes of Queensland's VET sector. The main challenge is for us to strike the right balance between contestability and managed markets to ensure the achievement of optimal outcomes. However, it is obvious that contestability is unlikely to be a feature of all training markets. We have spoken about whether some providers would be prepared to go to areas where they are not going to make money, but obviously that is not the case when we talk about providing education or training as a government. Subject to the findings of the task force, TAFE is likely to play a critical role in ensuring that individuals have access to a training place in areas where fully contestable markets are less likely to deliver an optimal solution.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, can you please explain vocational education and training in schools and if there are any suggestions to improve the current delivery model?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am sure all honourable members, especially new ones, know that in this portfolio we have lots of acronyms and lots of different words to describe things and it can be very confusing. I have been in the parliament for eight years, but others may not be quite sure what things such as VET and TAFE are. It is important that we acknowledge that we have these particular things. If you are in school and you want a different pathway to the traditional OP, you should have access to different pathways. We want people to be able to get different qualifications for whatever suits them and their lives. We want to have a demand driven vocational education and training or VET system that is consistent with the skill sets and qualifications that are needed by industry. That is being reviewed by the Skills and Training Taskforce, because obviously we know there is a clear role for vocational education and training in schools into the future.

A simple example is my 15-year-old son. Yesterday, he attended work experience in a place where next year, when he is in year 11, he is hoping to get a one-day-a-week position. Wouldn't you know it with him, it is doing games design. That is what he would like to do at the moment. Even though we need lots of people in IT, I do not know we necessarily need a lot in games design. We want him to ensure that he gets some qualifications. I said to him, 'Are you going to get a certificate 1 or 2 out of this?', but he could not quite answer me. The important thing is that the framework supports the achievement of the government's economic goals. Our VET revenue and general investment in VET in schools needs to be focused on employment outcomes. I am happy for my son to have the experience of working in a workplace and an understanding of what it is like to be at work, instead of just at school. Yesterday when he was given 45 minutes off for lunch, he thought, 'I don't really know what I am supposed to do here', because he had not done it before. Learning those things through VET in schools is a valuable experience for him. Obviously, potentially he may get a certificate 1 or 2—and I will be interested to see what it will be—if he gets the job.

It is important that our children have different pathways. It is so different to my era, which was the late seventies and early eighties: you got a TE score, you got an apprenticeship or you got a job. Now there are a number of different qualifications that you can get that start at a certificate and go all the way through. We want to try to get rid of this sense that you either go to TAFE or you go to university. Along the way there are 22 pathways and you can jump on and off the education continuum to improve, up skill, get a job, have a family, come back, get another skill. Let us not be afraid of going back and getting more skills or increased skills. In my day, if you could not do the academic work you were destined for an apprenticeship or a job. We want people to have more choice than that. Some children will start doing vocational education and training in school and then say, 'I don't want to be a hairdresser when I finish, but I am happy to be a hairdresser while I support myself at university or TAFE'. That is exactly what we want people to have. We want them to have the diversity that we may not have had in the past.

Ms Grantham: While the minister is grappling with what that could look like for his son, my youngest son actually did that. He started his carpentry apprenticeship in Year 11. One day a week he went off to his employer. When he completed year 12, he had completed his first year of his

apprenticeship and went into second year. It does open up a wide range of opportunities for students who are studying. Some courses, of course, do not have a practical component in the course of study, but others do. I think that would be obvious depending on what students choose to study.

One of the great things about VET in schools, either an apprenticeship, traineeship or a course of study that is leading towards either further education and personal development or it can be about employment, is that it all can count towards a Queensland Certificate of Education. There is great diversity for our students who are studying in years 11 and 12 to actually undertake a whole range of subjects that will give them those pathways, while still gaining that year 12 qualification. It is very important that every student who attends a school in Queensland leaves school with a viable option. Have they got a Certificate of Education that will get them into a university, a TAFE or a training organisation? Have they got some pathway to develop further opportunities?

In Queensland, we have the majority of the school based apprenticeships and traineeships for Australia. We have about 45 per cent, which is more than any other state for all of Australia's school based apprenticeships and traineeships. The big challenge that the Skills and Training Taskforce has been grappling with is, what amount of investment from the VET revenue general or the TAFE budget should be invested in students in schools? Part of that is, how many students convert from their school based VET experience and then go on and convert that to full-time study in a TAFE? A real dilemma is, what is the right level of investment in students in order that that converts later to full-time training? Obviously, we do not want to invest into school based apprenticeships and traineeships only to find it does not then add to a later opportunity.

Mr MULHERIN: It is also about the level of certificate of competency at the school.

Ms Grantham: It can; it does. They are all the issues that we have been looking at. The big thing for me is quality and opportunity. Certainly we want every experience that students have in schools with VET to add to that opportunity post-schooling.

Mr LATTER: Minister, I am happy to put this question on notice if need be. I would be interested, and I think the committee would be interested, if you could tell us what the financial performance of TAFE was like last year?

Mr LANGBROEK: I can actually provide the detail. The TAFE Queensland network of 11 non-statutory institutes returned an end-of-year surplus of \$1.991 million. It is a positive outcome given that the TAFE network encountered significant market weakness across the critical student training revenue streams in commercial markets, both domestically and for international students, due to economic conditions and a range of factors impacting the international student market. TAFE Queensland continues to achieve strong outcomes despite revenue decline in these areas. In a national comparison, Queensland delivers 72 per cent of all of its training in certificate 3 and above qualifications, matched only by the ACT. Over 43,700 TAFE Queensland students completed certificate 3 and above qualifications in 2011-12, which was an increase of 3.5 per cent over 2010-11. Employer and student satisfaction surveys for TAFE Queensland consistently returned very positive ratings. The latest National Centre for Vocational Education Research reports showed 91 per cent of employers are satisfied with nationally accredited training and 89.3 per cent of graduates are satisfied with the quality of their training.

I have mentioned to the committee that in my job I have been to a number of the TAFEs around the state, as well as the statutory institutes a number of times. I have visited the South Bank TAFE with the Premier, where we looked at the mock hospital ward that they have there. I have been to the Gold Coast to open an electrical building. I have been to Metropolitan South TAFE in the early days of the government. They have a dual degree that you can do in nursing and early childhood with Holmesglen, a dual sector in Melbourne. The South Queensland Institute of TAFE in Toowoomba has a big focus on catering and hospitality and they deal with a lot of the far western campuses as well. Our institute director spends a lot of time on the road, travelling to places such as Kingaroy, far western Queensland, Longreach and Charleville. I visited the Wide Bay TAFE on the day that I launched the fly in, fly out coordinator.

The important thing about TAFE is that with the 11 non-statutory institutes, obviously some perform better than others in terms of their financial performance. Because of the fact that we are able to lump them in together, we monitor them very carefully, on a month basis. Our acting deputy director-general of training keeps a close eye on this and I have monthly reports about the budget position. That is also a contrast with the previous government. We need to ensure that in our departments we are aware of what is happening, not on an annual basis but on a monthly basis, so we can follow the trends. That is something that we do not apologise for.

Once again I come back to the previous answer that it is all about the diversity of pathways. A very significant statistic that came out of last week's visit was that if you have a dual sector, something like 10 per cent of students who go to a TAFE will subsequently go on. I am sure that as a former TAFE teacher Madam Chair can confirm that. Ten per cent of people who go to TAFE will go on and get a degree. If you have a dual sector, you can get up to 80 per cent of students, because we have almost demystified the situation. They have the confidence. Many people who first come to TAFE say, 'I never

thought I could come to TAFE.’ In the case of central Queensland if we talk about doing the merger, people will say, ‘We have support here from the university, we want you, we have seen your ability, you can use your previous life education skills potentially to get into TAFE.’ Once they are there, we see people mature and learn, and they discover that they can do much more than they ever thought they could. It is all about the pathways.

CHAIR: I now call on the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Going back to the Central Queensland University, if the merger does not go ahead, can the university establish its own vocational education and training, within the university?

Mr LANGBROEK: Of course, this was also raised last week. I am confident; the cabinet has given in-principle support to the merger happening. At one of the forums it was mentioned that CQU had purchased a small RTO or established an RTO some time ago. I think the acting deputy director-general of training advised that she expects that that will no longer operate over time or that, had they ever been able to establish something that could be a competitor, which is what local TAFE people were concerned about, that that would not be an issue should there be a merger. I reassure the member: I am confident that the merger will go ahead once we work out the details about the financial arrangements. The director-general may want to add something there.

Ms Grantham: That is correct, they can establish a registered training organisation through due diligence and the proper process. The minister has just said that they had purchased an existing—

Mr MULHERIN: It was around the CSG industry. If that occurred it would put more financial pressure on TAFE; would that be correct?

Ms Grantham: Competition always adds pressure.

Mr MULHERIN: Going back to the Training Ombudsman, you said the abolition was about savings of \$393,000. The ombudsman was critical of training within the Brisbane City Council, I think, in the transport area when the now Premier was Lord Mayor. Did you discuss the removal of the ombudsman with the Premier or the Premier’s office at all?

Mr LANGBROEK: No.

Mr MULHERIN: That is fine. Just on costs, will there be an increase in the average cost of complaint for an apprentice, a trainee or an employer as a result of the move to QCAT and the Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am not aware of the charges. I do not believe there would have been charges imposed by anyone going to the Training Ombudsman.

Mr MULHERIN: No, but there will be.

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to seek some advice about it. We generally do not charge people to approach the ombudsman. A charge would be an impediment.

Mr MULHERIN: And for fronting the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal and also the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission?

Mr LANGBROEK: Obviously there was a charge for someone to go to QCAT.

Mr MULHERIN: Who will pay that cost? Will the government pay that cost on behalf of the apprentice or will the apprentice on apprentice wages have to pay that cost?

Mr LANGBROEK: That is an issue that we will certainly look at—that is, what the cost is going to be. They are the very issues that the department will monitor. As I understand it, the Training Ombudsman has dealt with groups of apprentices before. We will make sure we monitor that so that we do not have people with queries or inquiries about their training program deterred by the fact that there is a cost or charge to do it.

Mr MULHERIN: With an apprentice, one of the issues around retention is the wage structure of apprentices. If they have to stump up the money to appear before QCAT and have legal representation that is a barrier. How many complaints did you have say—

Mr LANGBROEK: There were 45 that the ombudsman investigated. As I say, that is something we acknowledge we will look into. We will also make sure—

Mr MULHERIN: So we are transferring the cost away from the government back to the individual?

Mr LANGBROEK: In this case we said that—

Mr MULHERIN: If it could not be resolved by the department.

Mr LANGBROEK: As I understand it, in some cases they already go to the QIRC and QCAT. It is a cost that they may be bearing anyway. We will make sure that we look into it to make sure that there is not a massive increase. The honourable member has acknowledged that the apprentice model, as it currently is, is from the 18th century and it leaves apprentices with so little money. That is probably a deterrent to considering an apprenticeship. That is why the Queensland Skills and Training Taskforce is looking at the apprenticeship model.

Mr MULHERIN: So you will get back to the committee with more information around the cost to the individual?

Mr LANGBROEK: I am happy to take on notice that we will provide to the committee some more specifics about the arrangements with the Training Ombudsman and the cost incurred before when going to the QIRC and QCAT and what the arrangements will be from 2012-13.

Mr MULHERIN: You seem big on reducing apparent duplication in some areas. Why is there both the Skills Queensland and the Skills and Training Taskforce review when both have the same functions?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. We are having the Skills and Training Taskforce look at Skills Queensland. The previous government had set up a number of different agencies. One of the reasons the chief executive and no senior management associated with Skills Queensland are on the Skills and Training Taskforce is that it is actually looking at how we are providing skills and training in Queensland generally. It is looking at all of the bodies that are there as well.

Mr MULHERIN: But Skills Queensland has a board that represents a whole range of industry. Those people come from various callings in life—from the big end of town managing large corporations—

Mr LANGBROEK: There are a number of unions represented as well.

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, but I also see you have union representation on the task force review.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, we do. The CFMEU is represented.

Mr MULHERIN: It just seems apparent that there may be an ulterior motive. Is this your mini Peter Costello review to provide a justification for shutting down TAFE campuses across Queensland?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. I think I have already dealt with this in some detail. What I can say about Skills Queensland and what the previous government set up is that there had been a number of reviews. As we have already discussed today at great length, there has been a general agreement that something needs to change in TAFE. The increase in people seeking to go to private providers meant that TAFE was potentially losing a lot of its client base. The previous government had set up reviews that led to nothing. Then Skills Queensland was not providing the outcomes that industry was saying it needed.

As opposed to that, the Newman government has come in with a clear direction—one that I passed on to the task force at their first meeting—which is that we are going to get this done and we are going to do something without an ulterior motive apart from that skills and training should be providing what we want it to in Queensland. No-one on the Skills and Training Taskforce is being paid so there is no duplication of cost. We are looking at the issue in a broader sense than those that are looked at by Skills Queensland.

We have had submissions to the task force from a number of unions, as I understand—the AWU and the Queensland Teachers Union submitting on behalf of their TAFE teachers. We have welcomed all of those contributions. The four pillars are represented on the task force. Importantly, we are going to get this review done but without any of the previous government's concerns such as 'We don't want to touch this or touch that.' We have said that we will put everything on the table and when we come to consider the recommendations we will make sure we bear in mind the greater good of the people of Queensland.

Ms Grantham: Skills Queensland is a statutory authority that was established in December 2010. It has statutory functions in its legislation that it must deliver—workforce development plans et cetera. It is a completely separate beast and is one part of the vocational education and training landscape in Queensland. It is probably the key body that has industry engagement as part of its core in terms of how it works and identifies the needs of industries.

The Skills and Training Taskforce is looking at all aspects of that landscape, of which Skills Queensland is one piece. That is why it is not represented. Part of the terms of reference for the Skills and Training Taskforce is industry engagement. So Skills Queensland, because it is the peak body leading that, is obviously part of that review. They have two very different functions: Skills Queensland an ongoing function and the Skills and Training Taskforce a short piece of work. This will build on previous reviews that have been conducted by a number of people in the past. We will have an outcome by the end of this year.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, we heard earlier a lot about investment in apprentices. I refer to page 40 of Budget Paper No. 4. How much new government funding is there in 2012-13 and 2013-14 to support apprentices?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. We have made that significant promise that I mentioned—10,000 apprentices over the next four years at a cost of \$86 million. Before we do that we want to make sure that we consider the report of the Skills and Training Taskforce. In terms of the quantum, I am happy to get you some more detail. I can certainly give you a report about the retention and completion rates of trainees and apprentices.

The important thing is that we have made a strong commitment to making sure we provide these 10,000 apprenticeships over the next four years. Because we are awaiting the findings of the Skills and Training Taskforce, which will make recommendations about apprentices, we do not have the detail yet. I do not want to pre-empt the work of the task force and say to them, 'You can meet on a voluntary basis for six hours and then report' and then have them say, you can imagine, 'You have already decided what to do with apprenticeships. Thanks very much for not actually considering the work we have been doing.' I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr MULHERIN: So no money will be spent in 2012-13 as part of the \$86 million apprenticeship program?

Mr LANGBROEK: The funding starts in 2014-15.

Mr MULHERIN: So nothing will be spent in 2012-13 or 2013-14?

Mr LANGBROEK: I can confirm the funding starts in 2014-15 which is to give us time to get some actions in place post the Skills and Training Taskforce. I can report that the government has allocated additional funds of \$8 million in 2014-15 and \$16.4 million in 2015-16, with the remaining to be allocated over the remaining two years to achieve this target.

Mr MULHERIN: Can you give those figures again? Some \$8 million in 2014-15, did you say?

Mr LANGBROEK: And \$16.4 million in 2015-16.

Mr MULHERIN: What will the money be spent on?

Mr LANGBROEK: We have developed a broad strategy which is about refocussing and realigning a range of key activities and actions to provide the necessary support within my department's core business and current programs—

Mr MULHERIN: What does the Public Service jargon mean in plain speak so that the mums and dads out there can understand what you are going to spend this \$86 million on?

Mr LANGBROEK: It is that we are going to have apprenticeships that will lead to real jobs as opposed to the previous government that had lots of apprenticeships and spruiked statistics all time but we had apprentices who said, 'I am not happy doing it and I cannot get out of it or if I get out it I do not get a real job.'

Mr LATTER: Point of order, Madam Chair. The question has been asked. The minister is trying to answer it. I cannot hear the answer for interjections.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I say in conclusion to that, part of what we do is user choice which is where apprentices get to choose what they do, how they do it and who they do it with. As a government we are making sure that we are providing it to people who can do the apprenticeships and traineeships and will get real jobs.

Mr MULHERIN: What incentives will there be for apprentices to complete their apprenticeships? Will there be any monetary incentives out of that \$86 million? We both acknowledge that retention is a big issue in the completion rate of various callings. Will that \$86 million include incentives for the apprentices or the employer? Will there be capital funding for both TAFE statutory institutes or private sector training providers?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for the question. It really comes back to something I have said before quite comprehensively. We are looking at the apprenticeship model. That is exactly what the Skills and Training Taskforce is doing. I invite the honourable member to make a submission if he would like to. I actually do not envisage that part of it will be that we just give people money to finish a course. We have considered different things over the years like giving employers thousands of dollars for a trainee. In fact, the federal government did one this year where it said that if you employ a senior for a certain amount of time you will get \$1,000. I do not see that really improving the system either.

What we need to do is have a root and branch review of the apprenticeship model. Obviously, there is lot of resistance to that from the unions. We are saying that we need to look at the current system in its entirety. That has also given us significant time to look at all the recommendations and then make sure that when we do it we do it so we get apprentices doing the courses they want with the employers they choose because they know they are going to get an adequate level of training and be supported by the government via user choice funding so that they end up with real jobs at the end of it.

Mr MULHERIN: Can you rule out the removal of redundancy provisions from the enterprise agreement of TAFE workers?

Mr LANGBROEK: Can I thank the honourable member for question. This also came up—

Mr MULHERIN: It is a rumour that is going around. I have had TAFE workers—

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. I can answer that. I am happy to provide an answer to the committee. We have completed an 11-month enterprise bargain with TAFE teachers which expires in June or July next year. I can honestly say that we have not turned our mind to what will happen

subsequent to that. If someone were to ask me today—and I think they did earlier today—about cleaners and teacher aides, I can say that we are committed to the current enterprise bargains which has been negotiated with cleaners and teachers aides and the one that has now been recommended for teachers. What I cannot tell you, again this is subject to the recommendations of the Skills and Training Taskforce, is what is going to happen for the next EB following the one that is currently in place.

Mr MULHERIN: Going forward with a new EB you do not know if redundancy provisions will be within that agreement?

Mr LANGBROEK: We always have them. I am here as the minister saying that I do not anticipate looking at or nor have we even considered removing something that has traditionally been part of enterprise bargaining negotiations. Even if TAFE teachers are concerned about what might happen in the future, we will make sure, as we did with our workforce in the current budget, we sit down as a department. Whilst we could have lost 1,140 positions, we tried to do it on a very personalised basis and that meant that we ended up with 405 voluntary redundancies not 1,100 people summarily dismissed.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Education, Training and Employment has expired. On behalf of the committee members, I sincerely thank you, the director-general, the chief executive officers and departmental officers for your attendance and for informing our examination of the proposed appropriation. The committee will now adjourn and return at 5 pm to consider the estimates for the portfolio the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr LANGBROEK: Madam Chair, thank you and your committee for the conduct of the investigation today. I want to thank my ministerial staff. It is obviously a significant issue that I have often heard mentioned at estimates by ministers. I thank my ministerial staff and my department because, as we all know, it is a big job. I thank the new members of parliament on both sides and also the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in his role here as the member for Mackay. I thank the committee staff, the Hansard staff and all of our parliamentary staff. I am sure it has been an enlightening opportunity for our new members of parliament especially. No-one seemed to fall asleep. I want to congratulate everyone for that. I look forward to doing this potentially on another occasion.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Proceedings suspended from 4.31 pm to 4.58 pm

ESTIMATES—EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE—SCIENCE, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION AND THE ARTS

In Attendance

Hon. RM Bates, Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr D McLeay, Chief of Staff

Mr D Wood, Senior Policy Adviser

Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts

Mr P Reed, Director-General

Mr D Crombie, Deputy Director-General, Innovation and Science Department

Dr C Williams, Assistant Director-General, Science Delivery

Mr M Burnheim, Assistant Director-General, Shared Services

Queensland Art Gallery

Ms S Raffel, Acting Chief Executive Officer



CHAIR: Good afternoon all. The estimates hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee is now resumed. We will now turn to consideration of the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts. On behalf of the committee, I would like to particularly welcome Minister Bates, the director-general, Mr Philip Reed, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing.

I am Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin and chair of the Education and Innovation Committee. The other committee members are Mr Tim Mulherin MP, member for Mackay and deputy chair; Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, member for Inala, who is not with us at the moment; Ms Jackie Trad MP, member for South Brisbane, who is visiting with us; Mr Steve Bennett MP, member for Burnett; Mr Neil Symes MP, member for Lytton; Mr Michael Latter MP, member for Waterford; Mr Mark Boothman MP, member for Albert; and Mr Michael Pucci MP, member for Logan. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. As I say, the member for South Brisbane has joined us for these proceedings.

I remind all those participants in the hearing today that these proceedings are proceedings of parliament and that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair. The committee has resolved that the proceedings of the committee be broadcast and that photography be allowed subject to the conditions for broadcasters of proceedings and guidelines for camera operators in estimates hearings. I ask that mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or switched to silent.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio of the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement. I remind you that there is a time limit of three minutes for such a statement.

Ms BATES: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, as a new department, was established to help drive Queensland's economy. Specifically, we are assisting to get Queensland back on track by growing a four-pillar economy, lowering the cost of living, investing in better infrastructure and planning, revitalising front-line services and restoring accountability in government.

My department has a genuine motivation to strengthen our wonderful state. We also have a major focus on delivering improved services to Queenslanders and to other government agencies. Importantly we will help agencies to reduce costs, waste and duplication so that vital resources can be rediverted to core service delivery in critical areas such as health, education, housing and emergency services. My department also has a key role in the economic development of the state. We are working with businesses to embrace the digital economy, we are partnering with universities and collaborating with researchers, and we are promoting the arts sector.

Getting value from every dollar we spend on IT infrastructure is a priority. We are currently working through the first ever comprehensive whole-of-government IT audit. The audit's focus is to identify savings and waste as well as major risks, performance and accountability issues in ICT within the Queensland government. The audit has already identified many significant challenges, and we will implement major reforms in ICT initiatives to ensure cost-effective delivery of government services.

In particular, my department will lead the development of a genuine one-stop shop for Queensland government services. It will be based on customer requirements, streamlining processes and optimising the current mix of channels. This will provide Queenslanders with improved access to government information online, over the phone and face to face. We will consolidate government information into the www.qld.gov.au website, call centre operations and phone service delivery by the 13QGOV phone number, and face-to-face counters providing integrated government services.

In the area of science we will provide a massive \$42 million boost to strengthen Queensland's tropical health defences. In partnership with James Cook University we will establish the Australian Institute of Tropical Health and Medicine. This will give Queensland researchers the ability to compete on a global scale. We have consolidated the Chief Scientist's leadership role in science policy, ensuring that we deliver practical scientific research and innovation to enhance Queensland's economy.

My department is also committed to developing a strong and diverse arts and cultural sector for Queensland. The Newman government's Arts for all Queenslanders policy will ensure that everyone can enjoy the arts in all its wonderful forms. We have dedicated \$3 million to the Regional Arts Fund so people across the state can experience ballet, opera, theatre and the orchestra. Another \$3 million will be allocated to the Super Star Fund so that organisations can apply for funding for major local productions that feature renowned artists. An Arts Investment Advisory Board is also in the process of being established to give greater transparency and ensure that Queensland taxpayers are getting bang for their buck.

I look forward to the reforms that we will bring about in the future. My department is committed to revitalising government services for families and the economy to get Queensland back on track.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The first period of questioning is allocated to non-government members. I call the member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I hope you are well enough for estimates. I note that it looks like you have an intravenous drip.

Ms BATES: I do.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS regarding restoring accountability in government. Last week the Attorney-General tabled his lobbyist register. Will you do the same today?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question and I also thank you for your concern about my health. It is appreciated. You will also appreciate that obviously I will not be able to flick through the SDS books with one hand given the fact that I am right-handed and that arm is in a sling.

In answer to your question, I am aware that the opposition asked for my diary. Unfortunately I understand that there was a mistake on the behalf of the opposition office and the diary was not presented. But certainly I can assure the honourable member that if we or anybody in my office has met with lobbyists they would be filled in on the lobbyist register.

Mr MULHERIN: So you will table the lobbyist register?

Ms BATES: I do not have it available with me at the moment.

Mr MULHERIN: Can you table it by the end of proceedings today?

CHAIR: I would question the member for Mackay whether this is pertinent to today's proceedings.

Mr MULHERIN: With all due respect, Madam Chair, page 5 of the SDS refers to restoring accountability in government. It is about the interaction of an economic minister with the business community. No doubt it raises concerns. It is a great objective to be accountable in government. The minister has indicated that she does have a lobbyist register. The Attorney-General was able to table his lobbyist register. I am asking the minister if she will do the same today.

CHAIR: Minister, are you agreeable to this particular request since it is not directly part of the appropriations?

Ms BATES: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, we are all about accountability in government. That is why we started the initiative of eovernment so that all of the information that previously was not available will be there. I am happy to take it on notice. But I also mention to the member for Mackay that my staff have actually gone home, so logistically that would be a little bit difficult this evening.

Mr MULHERIN: You will take it on notice. Minister, how many times have you met with well-known lobbyist Santo Santoro since becoming a minister?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I have mentioned, every lobbyist regardless of who they are—either former conservative members of parliament or indeed former Labor members of parliament who are lobbyists—would all be in that lobbyist register, and I am happy to provide that for you, as I mentioned.

Mr MULHERIN: I refer to page 21 of the SDS which states that of \$303 million in increased expenditure in 2012-13 compared to 2011-12 most of that expenditure relates to the establishment of the department resulting from machinery-of-government changes. Could you please outline exactly how much the establishment of your department has cost?

Ms BATES: I will defer that question to my director-general seeing as he was intricately involved in the machinery-of-government changes for my department.

Mr Reed: I am quite happy, if the minister is in agreement, to obtain that information during the course of the hearing and get back to you on that. It is a relatively small sum.

Mr MULHERIN: Could you also include how the costs were incurred or how they will be incurred and how much is the cost of capital and how much is operating costs, if you do not mind?

Mr Reed: Yes, I am happy to consider that. As to whether we can provide that this afternoon, again, if the minister is agreeable, we are happy to take it on notice.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you indicated in your opening statement that you are one of the economic ministers of the government and innovation is part of driving the economy. Are you able to advise what Queensland's multifactor productivity is? As an economic minister, what is the multifactor productivity of Queensland?

Ms BATES: Thank you very much for the question. Obviously productivity in Queensland has decreased rather dramatically. In fact it is probably the lowest in the country. But I am sure if you want further detailed information the DDG for innovation, Darren Crombie, would be more than happy to furnish you with an answer.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I have asked you. Do you know what multifactor productivity for innovation is? Do you know what it is?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly the former government, your government, did have some quite innovative ideas such as trains with no seats and trains that actually had air-conditioning units that could not go through tunnels. What else was there? Yes, of course—the Goodwill Bridge that nobody factored in that they would have to sink to tow it down the Brisbane River. Economically where innovation was concerned with your government I think there were some pretty major blow-outs.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you obviously do not understand what multifactor productivity is as it relates to innovation. It is a measure of the expenditure of the outputs, keeping labour and capital inputs fixed, coming from a technological change—for example, working smarter. Given that you do not understand the term, what briefings have you sought from your department regarding the multifactor productivity index in innovation?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I do not like being verbaled either and do not assume anything because we all know what that does to people. In relation to briefings that I have had with Innovation, I have certainly worked very closely with the department. We have had a number of innovation round tables that certainly outlined the waste of the former Labor government. Most of those people who attended could not believe some of the things that were funded by your government, and they are actively working with me to make sure that we innovate into commercialisation. The department of innovation and science is now working much more closely together so that we are not just doing, for instance, research for the sake of research. We are looking at research into innovation.

One of the things that was not done by your government was to actually go out to business and ask them what problems they had that they needed solved with research and innovation. Certainly having a whole group of bureaucrats sitting in shopfronts around Queensland waiting for businesses to come in to teach them how to innovate, in my experience as a businesswoman, those businesses would be out of business.

The key points basically are, as I said, that productivity was in decline for the past decade, and I have already stated that Queensland had the worst. My department will combine resources, as I have said, with other departments to remove any blockages, facilitate innovation, commercialisation and collaboration. Quite frankly, one of the major issues that everyone at the innovation round table raised with me was the incredible amount of red tape that it took to get anything done here in Queensland. We are about removing those blockages so that we can actually get on with the business of doing business, which I am quite sure is a foreign concept to a Labor government.

Mr MULHERIN: My next question is to the director-general. Mr Reed, as the minister was unable to provide an adequate answer on multifactor productivity for innovation, do you know what it is in Queensland?

Mr Reed: No, I am not aware.

Mr MULHERIN: As the director-general responsible for innovation, do you think that you should be aware so that you can assure—

Mr PUCCI: Point of order, he is asking for an opinion.

CHAIR: That is asking for an opinion, member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: It is about content. Director-general, you are responsible for the department. Productivity is a key measure in developing programs. What productivity measures did you take into account in providing the minister with information about programs that the government wanted to deliver to increase the multifactor productivity in Queensland?

Mr Reed: I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly, the department is looking at all work that is being done, particularly by people like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD, and other entities to look at how innovation and productivity fit together. As far as the department's development of this area is concerned, we are still developing the policy on the innovation and science framework.

Mr MULHERIN: Has the department used, or is it aware of, the information that is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in relation to both the multifactor productivity index for the economy and some refined work they have done in relation to innovation?

Mr Reed: I will just consult with my colleague. We have done an analysis of the ABS data which shows that the national business innovation levels dropped nearly five percentage points to 39 per cent between 2010 and 2011, which is what the minister said before, and that that downturn in innovation is actually what has been reflected in the recent results in the 2012 Queensland Business Innovation Report.

Mr MULHERIN: Sorry, what was that again?

Mr Reed: ABS data shows that the national business innovation levels dropped nearly five percentage points to 39 per cent between 2010 and 2011 and that this downturn in innovation activity is also reflected in the recent results from the 2012 Queensland Business Innovation Report.

Mr MULHERIN: So that has not really been taken into account when designing these sorts of programs that the minister was referring to?

Mr Reed: The other issue that has just been raised with me is that this technical area in general is actually part of OESR within Treasury. Clearly, we consult with our colleagues there as part of the work that we do. They are the technical experts in this area.

Mr MULHERIN: We have heard right throughout this estimates process that the government will not work in silos; it will work across government. What level of interaction have you had with OESR in relation to this matter?

Mr Reed: I will just get the deputy director-general, innovation and science to respond to that question.

Mr Crombie: I concur with the director-general's comment that, specifically in relation to multifactor productivity, that is not an area I have specialisation in. It is a technical matter, as the DG explained, that in a state context is a matter for the Treasury portfolio and OESR. I meet periodically with the OESR about a number of matters. I have not met specifically with them about MFP however.

Mr MULHERIN: So advice is not sought or given by OESR in relation to this matter in determining policy initiatives?

Ms BATES: I would like to know the relevance that your line of questioning has to the budget estimates for DSITIA. I am more than happy to continue speaking about innovation. However, I think you have just been pretty fairly told that this expertise area is in Treasury. I am happy to continue to speak particularly about the innovation round tables that we have had. In fact, the Chief Scientist, Geoff Garrett, has been co-chairing the science and innovation round tables with me. We have had to make some tough decisions that have been left as a legacy of your government. We have delivered this budget. It saves Queenslanders from a future of debt and decline. Now we have a state that is open for business, and open for business means an open-door policy where businesses can actually come and speak to me any time they like. In fact, the common thread from businesses at all of the round tables that I have held across my portfolio was that they had actually never experienced a consultative approach in an open forum as they have with me. In fact, they found it very difficult to meet with the former minister. I am going to continue to run my portfolio like a business, and that means that the door will be open—

Mr MULHERIN: Without taking into account any information from the office of statistical review and Treasury?

Ms BATES: Certainly I will be working closely with the Treasurer on the economic development of the Queensland government. With all due respect, member for Mackay, the Treasurer has been pretty busy trying to dig us out of the incredible mess that your government has left us with. We were heading towards \$85 billion of debt under a Labor government. At the moment every man and woman in

Queensland is paying back about \$650,000 an hour in interest. I think it is a pretty long bow for a member of a government that enabled Queensland to be in such dire straits to even talk about productivity or innovation. It was probably next to impossible to undergo any sort of innovation with a government that was broke.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you talked earlier in response to another question about providing the lobbyist register during this session. You said that there was no-one in your office. Was that correct?

Ms BATES: My understanding is that the administration staff, who would be able to provide that information, particularly my executive assistant, have already left. Unless you ring her personally—

Mr MULHERIN: So it is only the executive assistant who can provide that information?

Ms BATES: She is the one who controls the lobbyist register along with the chief of staff.

Ms TRAD: Minister, it seems very odd—in fact, it seems a little bit unwilling on your part—not to try to provide this information.

Mr PUCCI: Point of order, that is an imputation, not a question.

Ms TRAD: It is a question. It seems pretty odd.

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member. I have just stated that I am more than happy to provide that information but physically, unless Kirsty is still in the office, I seriously doubt that we will be able to do that. As I mentioned, I have no hesitation in providing for you or anybody else on this committee the lobbyists we have met since I have been the minister.

Mr MULHERIN: An important part of improving productivity and innovation is developing a skilled and talented workforce by investing in people and skills. I note from your answer to non-government question on notice No. 2 that your department is cutting \$9 million in 2012-13 from grants for PhD, scholarships and fellowships. How will this cut help develop a smarter and more innovative workforce?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. It does give me an opportunity again to talk about how this government is using innovation as part of our plan to get Queensland back on track. As I mentioned, for Labor, innovation meant corporate welfare and putting bureaucrats in shopfronts to teach businesses how to innovate. The Newman government is taking a very different approach. Innovation is no longer just big cardboard cheques and photo opportunities. As I said, this government sees innovation as a key driver of our economic success. We will use innovation to get productivity in Queensland back on track. In answer to your question, my department provides grants and through Arts Queensland—

Mr MULHERIN: Is that corporate welfare?

Ms BATES: I beg your pardon?

Mr MULHERIN: You have been referring to grants. Is a grant a form of corporate welfare? You are critical of corporate welfare.

Ms BATES: Again, do not put words in my mouth. What we are trying to do is change the culture of a handout to that of a hand up. That is why, particularly in Innovation and the Arts, we are looking at our investment boards, because we believe that there needs to be government investment into what were former grants processes. Innovation grants from the past have all been honoured in this budget. The amounts that were set aside prior to us taking government have been honoured, particularly around science. If you want to know particularly about a PhD study, I am sure that the chief scientist would be happy to accommodate you.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, I have asked you, not the chief scientist. In your response to that question on notice you said that the department is cutting \$9 million in the 2012-13 budget from grants for PhDs, scholarships and fellowships. I just ask the question again: how will this cut help develop a smarter and more innovative workforce if you are cutting PhDs?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member. As I said, I am happy to refer that to the chief scientist. In relation to the grants, any tripartite grants, particularly those with the federal government, have been honoured. If you have a particular question in relation to a particular PhD grant, I am sure I can refer that to the chief scientist.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, why did your department fund the Brisbane Innovation Scorecard in 2012-13, which has revealed that fewer businesses are innovating than a year ago, whilst cutting programs and funding that help drive innovation?

Ms BATES: I believe the innovation scorecard was a Brisbane City Council initiative.

Mr MULHERIN: No, Minister, from memory—and I will have to find the document—I think you even wrote a foreword to the document. It was a work that was done by the previous government in partnership with the University of Queensland, Brisbane City Council, the RDA—

Ms BATES: So Brisbane City Council was involved in it. I thought it was. I am pretty sure that Councillor Graham Quirk, the mayor, did a full page story on that in the *Sunday Mail* about the innovation that was funded through the Brisbane City Council. I am happy to defer your question to Darren Crombie.

Mr MULHERIN: Before we go to Mr Crombie, yes, my memory serves me well. There is a photograph of you and a foreword.

Ms BATES: I believe there is a photograph of somebody else there, too, is there not? That would be the Lord Mayor.

Mr MULHERIN: It is called the Innovation Scorecard.

Ms BATES: Thanks very much. I am referring the rest of the question—

Ms TRAD: For the committee, it is a correction. It is Greg Combet who is the other person in that.

Ms BATES: Of course! That would be a close friend of yours. I will refer the rest to Darren Crombie.

Mr Crombie: My understanding is that the department did have an involvement in supporting the Brisbane Innovation Scorecard. Could I also say that the primary involvement from our point of view was in the Queensland Business Innovation Report, which we did fund. Some of the data used in that Brisbane Innovation Scorecard report references the data that we actually paid the University of Queensland to produce on the state's behalf.

Mr MULHERIN: It was the business school?

Mr Crombie: Yes, it was. Correct. Part of the arrangement, as I understand it, between ourselves and the Brisbane Innovation Scorecard was to have the foreword in there. So our primary role was around the Queensland business innovation report.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you are the minister responsible for innovation. That scorecard shows that fewer businesses are innovating now than a year ago. Getting back to my original question to you, why are you cutting these programs and funding which would drive innovation?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member. Productivity and innovation have been declining in Queensland since about 2002. This government, as I have mentioned, is using science and innovation to drive economic success. I am sure there would have been much more innovation in business in Queensland had Queensland business been able to get on with what they do best and actually do business—from a government that tied them up in both red and green tape and made it next to impossible to fund any innovation.

Over \$9 million has been committed to innovation activities across the state in 2012-13. That is actually ensuring funding for existing innovation activities will continue. Most of the businesses—I have said it to you and this committee before—just shook their heads at some of the funding that was provided for certain programs that did not help innovate anything here in Queensland. So we, unlike the former government, are focused on ensuring innovation efforts going forward are returning a dividend to the community for the investments that have already been made.

This government has a clear vision to get Queensland back on track, and innovation is a major part of that vision. That is why we have put science and innovation together, so that they can work collaboratively and better—instead of the way it worked with the former government, with DEEDI. Businesses had complained to me that innovation went down a black hole, never to be seen again.

I actually asked for the innovation portfolio, particularly in relation to ICT, because most of the businesses have said that they had some fantastic ideas that just did not go anywhere. We are developing a science and innovation action plan with the Chief Scientist which will outline our actions across government to support delivery of demand driven science and remove impediments to business driving innovation. We will continue, as I said, to consult with the key stakeholders to ensure that as actions are developed and implemented they meet clients' needs. Unlike your government, we will get out of the way of business and allow them to get on with business.

Mr MULHERIN: That is why we have 6.3 per cent unemployment under your government.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Mackay.

Mr MULHERIN: The Kennett government created 20,000 jobs in its first six months.

CHAIR: The time for non-government questions is well and truly over. We now will be moving to government questions. Minister, the government has committed to putting the Queensland Chief Scientist properly in charge of Queensland's science policy to align the state's applied science efforts with our economic challenges. Could you inform the committee what actions have been taken to date to deliver these commitments and what is planned for the future?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously you have been listening to the answers I have given so far about innovation and the Chief Scientist. Firstly, we recognise the importance of science in meeting Queensland's economic, social and environmental challenges. The LNP government created a new Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, placing science, technology and engineering as a key focus for this state government for our endeavours and concerns. The department works very closely with the other departments involved in the development and delivery of science in the various sectors but lifts the overall profile of science and

its applications in Queensland. Relatedly, to ensure Queensland's science policy aligns with the state's applied science efforts, the government has transitioned the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist into this department, where the Queensland Chief Scientist is being supported by staff from the Innovation and Science Development Division within the department in the development and implementation of science policy.

Secondly, in formalising an election commitment, the Queensland Chief Scientist, with whom I meet regularly, in collaboration with the department, is leading the development of a framework to deliver Science and Innovation for Economic Success and a corresponding detailed implementation plan. We will be seeking to ensure more effective translation of science activities into concrete outcomes and benefits for this state. As I have mentioned earlier, I have had a number of round table discussions with industry and academia to help inform the content and focus of this framework and to ensure that we draw upon expertise from across all relevant spheres. Departmental officials have also engaged in a cross-government dialogue consultation process in firming up the key elements.

As I mentioned earlier, Darren Crombie is now the DDG for science and innovation. As I have mentioned, it is a relatively new initiative so we are still bedding down a lot of the policies. But, unlike the former government, we are actually out there consulting at this stage, before policies are finalised, because I am a firm believer, as you well know, Madam Chair, that the best policies have input from those who have to implement them or who have suffered from poor Labor policy in the past.

All of these consultation processes are determined to revitalise business competitiveness through science and innovation; enhance Queensland's scientific and technological capacity; network with and build collaborations between industry, research and education; and encourage innovation within government. The Queensland government actually has a whole lot of IP that has never been commercialised. In fact, one of my next directives to the DDG is to do an audit across the whole of government for the IP that the Queensland government currently has which has not been commercialised. We are working to enable the necessary skills to give Queenslanders a real edge in global competition. This framework will inform the government's actions in the science and innovation space and ensure a coordinated, timely response to the complex economic challenges that face this state.

Thirdly, and probably most importantly, the Queensland Chief Scientist has conducted a pilot audit and strategic analysis of the department's science capability, focused predominantly in the environmental domain, to fully understand its strengths and challenges and how these can be best applied. The intent is to roll this process out across other relevant government departments in close liaison with departmental heads to develop a more in-depth analysis of the state's in-house science related capabilities, challenges and opportunities. The audit process for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has just commenced, with the strong support of the director-general of that department.

Fourthly, through the government R&D committee, which is chaired by the Queensland Chief Scientist and involves senior representatives from 12 government departments, a mapping process on prevailing priorities, activities and investments by state government departments is being undertaken. This was undertaken to stop the silo mentality of the former government. Again, this is the first time a science audit has been taken across the whole of government, so that we know what is happening in everybody else's department. This will allow us to construct a whole-of-government approach to and a whole-of-government overview of science in Queensland—where we are, where we want to go and how we plan to get there. This overview will help us identify possible gaps and key synergies and make our investment in Queensland science the best it can be.

Fifthly, the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist is also undertaking an evaluation of the health of Queensland science—that is, our skills, our investments, our performance—to be delivered to me in December. This objective assessment, together with the above-mentioned initiatives, will help us better understand and properly reposition the Queensland government's science capabilities and investments in support of the state government's objectives.

Mr PUCCI: Good afternoon, Minister. It is nice to see you on the mend. I hope you have a speedy recovery.

Ms BATES: Thank you.

Mr PUCCI: Recognising that research, development and application lie at the heart of our economic development, could you outline what steps have been taken to rebuild our science and technology capability and to strengthen links between Queensland scientists, industry and the broader community?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for his question. Before we can rebuild our science and technology capability, we need to understand what existing capability we have and how this can be applied to benefit Queensland. As I mentioned earlier, there has always been a silo approach with the former Labor government. This enables us to find out exactly who is doing what in which department and how we can best assist them. In this current economic climate we know to focus our efforts and

resources on science that better addresses current problems for industry and the broader community and helps pre-empt future crises. This is another reason I and the Chief Scientist have been collaborating with the universities and are in discussion with industry—so that we are aware of their needs and that we are not just doing research for the sake of research; we are doing research that can be commercialised, that can be of greater benefit to the businesses in Queensland.

It is important that we devote the scarce resources on science to advancing the state's priorities and to be sure that our science capability around the state is positioned and empowered to provide quality, fact based decision support around key policy issues and challenges. We recognise that investing in science and innovation is a long-term proposition, and we need to make the right decisions to ensure we get the best return on investment in both science and innovation over the long term and that they work closely together. That is obviously another reason we put the two departments together: so they can assist one another.

Accordingly, we are working across all government departments that contribute to the government's programs to, firstly, capture the expenditure on research and development and assist the planning of science and innovation initiatives through a rolling three-year planning process. Secondly, as far as the state's investment is concerned, we want to have real science, and innovation needs to be applied and taken up. There is little point funding science or innovation that goes no further than a research paper on a shelf. Our science and innovation needs to be used. The links between science, industry, innovation and the broader community are therefore critical for our investment into the future to bear fruit.

We want to minimise the gap between research and its application and maximise the impact of that research. Accordingly, in the development of our science and innovation action plan, which integrates the actions my department will be taking to support both science and innovation priorities, these themes—that is, revitalising business competitiveness through science and innovation, and nurturing networks of collaboration between industry, research and education—are central ones. We will therefore work with universities and industry groups, which we have already done. As I mentioned, I have had a number of round tables. The Chief Scientist and the DDG for innovation will be chairing a further two of those round tables in coming weeks. This is all to make sure we put together an action plan which integrates the actions that my department will be taking to support science and innovation priorities.

These themes, as I said, will revitalise business competitiveness through science and innovation. We will continue to nurture those networks of collaborations between industry, research and education. They are central. We will, as I said, work with universities and industry groups to help foster productive connections that are beneficial for both sides. We are asking them questions like, 'What can we do to get out of your way, to make things easier for you? How do we reduce the red tape? How do we reduce the green tape? How many forms did you have to fill in before? How many times were you sent from one person to another person before you got anywhere at all, if indeed you got anywhere with your ideas?'

Queensland, as you know, is a big state, but if we are to grow our science and our industry then communities need to be better linked and not separated by distance or approach. We want to address the gap between the laboratory bench and the shop or the factory floor. We want to see ideas implemented and visions realised so that we all benefit from our combined efforts—not have great ideas stuck on bookshelves because the links between research and implementation were not quite there.

Correspondingly, through the work of the cross-government Queensland R&D committee, chaired by the Queensland Chief Scientist, we are developing a set of decision rules, providing investment and prioritising guidelines which, inter alia, highlight the importance of emphasising impacts from research as well as closer engagement and better collaboration to enhance effective take-up and applications for our research endeavours.

There are many complex challenges facing this state, from managing the Great Barrier Reef to preserve its value for future generations through to the diversification of our energy portfolio and helping supply safe food for the world's growing population. Science and innovation lies at the heart of many, if not all, of these issues. We are committed to both and it is one of the key foundations of Queensland's four-pillar economy. As the Minister for Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts I look forward to the next two years and beyond.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I now call the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, I also wish you a speedy recovery. For the Queensland Chief Scientist to be properly in charge of science policy, to which the government is committed, there needs to be a comprehensive and objective assessment of government science capability. Did such a baseline assessment exist when the government took office? If not, how is this critical gap being addressed?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for Albert for the question and his good wishes. What had previously been reported through the Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist was a financial summary of departmental expenditure in science and research over the past financial year. This report on departmental R&D expenditure tracks investment in research and development, both in-house and

externally, for the previous financial year against the national fields of research codes. This allowed longitudinal analysis of the state's past investment in R&D, a key element in any assessment of science capability.

There was also the recent annual report of the Queensland Chief Scientist, which provided a personal and whole-of-government perspective of Queensland's science and the issues facing it. In addition to these unplanned assessments, there were ad hoc, one-off reports such as *Understanding floods*, which were developed in response to unforeseen one-off events and now provide good baseline information going forward. These are valuable information sources. However, they are not sufficient in and of themselves to guide the future of science in Queensland. There were critical gaps in what we knew about science in Queensland, which prevented us making fully informed decisions on how best to advance science in this state. When we took office, there was no single document or suite of documents that brought together past investment and current capability with the likely future challenges to guide the government's future research investment priorities and actions. There was no comprehensive baseline assessment of science capability across government.

A clear baseline evaluation would aim to provide a way of more objectively identifying the government's research, relative strengths and weaknesses, give an assessment of prevailing research endeavours, expenditure against priorities and suggest a methodology for pinpointing areas where further investment is needed or reductions might be possible. However, in recognising the clear needs for a more definitive baseline of where we are now to inform and plan for where we need to be, we have initiated a review of the government's science capability. This is of particular relevance and urgency in the current financial situation, where scarce resources must be managed and allocated for maximum impact.

As such, I have started with a pilot audit of science capability within my own department, which has involved an analysis of the science program currently undertaken by Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist. This was an issue that was raised when we were over at BIO. A lot of the universities and a lot of the potential business investors, angel investors and venture capitalists had no idea what science we were doing here in Queensland, let alone what the other states were doing, and the other states did not realise what we were doing. So this audit is certainly going to assist us to know exactly what science programs are being undertaken and innovation programs as well in collaboration with the DDG for innovation and his department.

This audit has involved an assessment of the scope and content of the current scientific program and how it aligns with the government's priorities and objectives—not the former government's, this government's. It has identified key client and stakeholders as well as comprehensively describing the resources and capabilities required to conduct the program. It has weighed up the advantages and disadvantages of the current business model in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and service quality and considered alternative models and suppliers to the current approach and has made recommendations going forward. The intent is to roll out this process across other relevant government departments in close liaison with departmental heads. The audit process for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has just commenced with the strong support of that director-general and his department.

In parallel with this process, we are conducting the annual survey of R&D expenditure across all relevant government departments to provide a snapshot of the most recent investments in science and innovation across the state relative to previous years. The Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist is working with all departments accessing funding, implementing or commissioning research to develop their own departmental R&D plans. Once all are complete, we will be able to integrate these in a whole-of-government R&D action plan and respond collaboratively to emerging opportunities.

Finally, future investments in research and development will be guided by the decision rules. These decision rules are currently being finalised and will provide an objective, evidence based approach to the allocation of scarce government resources.

CHAIR: Thank you. I call the member for Waterford.

Mr LATTER: Minister, all the best for a speed recovery. Recently in this very House you hosted a showcase of some very innovative technologies. Perhaps you might like to tell us how innovative science data networks are assisting scientists state-wide to map Queensland's resources and land use?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. The implementation of a number of the Queensland government's mapping and land use programs is reliant on readily available access to current and comprehensive state-wide information. Program areas requiring this information include the agricultural land audit, the statutory regional plans, the management of state lands, vegetation resources, farming practices in reef catchment areas and natural disaster planning and response. Satellite imagery sourced from a range of international space agencies is a key tool for the provision of this information and satellite image data volumes are very large. Scientists from DSITIA's Science Delivery Division are now linked to AARNet, which is Australia's Academic and Research Network. This provides the Queensland government with superfast internet access to readily download satellite

imagery. AARNet is up to 100 times faster than the nominal speed of the National Broadband Network, making access to large quantities of satellite imagery technically and economically viable for the Queensland government.

The connection to AARNet provides a five gigabyte per second connection to all of Australia's universities, the CSIRO and partner science networks in Asia, Europe and North America. AARNet is directly linked to DSITIA's high-performance computing facility at the Ecosciences Precinct, which I have had the pleasure of visiting, enabling high-speed download and automatic processing to produce maps of Queensland's resources and land use quickly and efficiently. DSITIA scientists have been using Landsat satellite imagery from NASA for nearly 20 years to map and monitor land cover and land use in support of government policies and initiatives. In a recent development, NASA and the US Geological Survey have made the Landsat image archive available online, accessible for free download. DSITIA scientists have been using the high-speed connection at the Ecosciences Precinct to access this imagery on behalf of the Queensland government. As an example, in just a single month DSITIA scientists have recently downloaded an additional 11,000 Landsat satellite images from NASA for the whole of Queensland for a nominal cost of a few thousand dollars. The scientists estimate that, without this, this would have cost them around \$90,000 in download costs.

Within the next few months it is anticipated that DSITIA scientists will have acquired the entire Landsat satellite image archive for Queensland. This equates to around 70,000 satellite images and will provide a record of Queensland's land surface about once every fortnight since 1984. The ability to link this net with national and international academic research institutions, the CSIRO and partner networks around the world is enabling strong, collaborative virtual partnerships to be formed. This is helping to maintain Queensland's position as a world leader in the use of satellite imagery to develop large-area, state-wide mapping and monitoring programs such as the Statewide Land Cover and Trees Study, the Queensland Ground Cover Monitoring Program and the Queensland Land Use Mapping Program. This initiative supports the government's election commitment to rebuilding our state's practical and applied scientific and technology capabilities. Thank you for your question.

CHAIR: Thank you, minister. It is now time for non-government questions.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, madam chair, and thank you to the committee—

Mr Reed: Excuse me, madam chair, I have an answer to a question that I was asked by the member for Mackay earlier. Is it appropriate that I provide that answer now?

CHAIR: Yes, thank you, Mr Reed.

Mr Reed: The question was about the \$303 million increase in expenditure within the budget estimates. The answer to that question is that the \$303 million referred to is the difference between the department's total estimated expenses for the 2012-13 financial year of \$437.167 million and the department's estimated actual expense for the 2011-12 financial year of \$134.505 million. The difference is \$303 million, as per page 22 of the SDS.

The 2011-12 expenses represented the period of 1 May 2012 to 30 June 2012 only as the department was only established for reporting purposes during this period following the establishment of the department on 3 April 2012. The 2012-13 estimated expenses represent the full 12-month cost of delivering upon the department's objectives as compared to only two months during the 2011-12 financial year and accounts for the variance that has been noted. All costs of establishing the department have been funded from existing budget allocations. No additional funding has been sought to establish the department.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Reed.

Ms TRAD: Thank you. Thank you, madam chair, and the committee for allowing me to appear. Minister, I refer you to page 6 of your SDS and particularly in relation to the Great Barrier Reef. The previous government allocated \$5 million. This is on page 7 of the water quality investment strategy. With the committee's permission, I table a copy for their benefit.

CHAIR: Does the committee grant permission? Thank you.

Ms TRAD: Page 7 of the investment strategy talks about the paddock to reef modelling and monitoring as well as \$9.5 million for related scientific initiatives. Can you advise on any changes in the quantum of this investment and changes to monitoring and modelling programs that receive this function?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I also probably need to point out that the new department of science is a business unit. We provide science capability to every other department. Basically, the key points in relation to your question are that this information generated by the program was used to measure and report on the progress towards the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan—the reef plan—and its goals and targets. This obviously informs government, industry, regional bodies and the community about the success of improved land management initiatives in improving water quality in reef catchments. The program integrates information on the uptake of improved agricultural management practices, the effectiveness and profitability of these practices,

catchment indicators and water quality. The paddock to reef program of investment forms part of the Queensland government's election commitment to maintain \$35 million per annum for these reef initiatives. As I mentioned, DSITIA plays a lead role in delivering critical science for the paddock to reef program. The department's contribution is approximately \$2 million annually for intensive water-quality monitoring and modelling and remote sensing activity. The latter includes the mapping of catchment indicators, such as ground cover, riparian vegetation, wetlands and land use.

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines all work collaboratively with interlinked funding arrangements in order to support and deliver the reef plan's science component. As I mentioned, we deliver the business side for those departments to continue on with those programs. The scientific information, however, generated through this collaborative program is summarised into reef wide and regional information as part of the reef report cards released by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. This information will help to inform land management practices and to improve reef quality outcomes. Thank you for your question. There has been no change in this program.

Ms TRAD: Previously the investment strategy had identified that \$9.5 million was being used for scientific purposes in relation to reef water quality. You are saying that your department is spending \$2 million, but that is only in terms of business capacity. Is that right?

Ms BATES: I am happy to clarify that for you. You may or may not be aware, but the department of environment and resource management no longer exists and some of that science capability came over to me. Your question would have been in relation to DERM's previous budget. As I have just explained to you, we are a new discrete business unit in science and we will continue to support the other departments in their endeavours.

Ms TRAD: I was interrupted by you. I will finish my sentence. In your SDS you claim that for the upcoming year you will coordinate reef science projects undertaken by your department and the other relevant departments. I am asking you, as the coordinating agency that has science in its title, what is the total spend on scientific projects that will lead to better monitoring and better outcomes for reef water quality?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am happy to refer that off to either the Chief Scientist or the assistant DG.

Mr MULHERIN: You don't know much.

Ms TRAD: Not unless it is written in front of her.

CHAIR: I would ask members to desist from personal comments.

Dr Williams: The Paddock to Reef Program is managed through DSITIA, however there is a broader program of reef science which is organised through the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. We are just doing one component. The remainder of that is delivered through a group within EHP. They do work that coordinates research for universities, CSIRO as well as some projects within DSITIA. That is large, a \$9.5 million program. It is still continuing. There has been no change as far as I am aware. That is managed through EHP.

Ms TRAD: Through you, Minister, if I can ask Dr Williams: From your answer I understand now that the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is coordinating scientific monitoring of reef water quality?

Dr Williams: No, we coordinate the Paddock to Reef Program which is the scientific monitoring program. There is research also being undertaken, coordinated through EHP, on the broader reef science issue and that is also a substantial amount of money. I do not have that figure to hand. We coordinate the research on monitoring, but there is other work being done in terms of the accuracy of monitoring techniques, looking at different ways in which farm productivity can be affected. These projects fund university researchers, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the universities throughout the state. That research is a program that is being delivered and that is also a substantive amount of money.

Ms TRAD: DSITIA is coordinating all of those projects?

Dr Williams: No, the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection is coordinating those programs.

CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane, technically these questions should go to the minister who can then refer them.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. I did reference my first one to Dr Williams with the minister's leave.

Mr MULHERIN: You can go back to the minister if you want.

Ms TRAD: Yes, okay. Did you have a question?

Mr MULHERIN: There seems to be some confusion around coordination. Listening to the official, she is saying you have only got some of the coordination but is fairly explicit about the role. Can you tell me is all science and scientists within government located in your department?

Ms BATES: The answer to that question is no. I can clarify that for you. The scientists who were at Boggo Road have come over to DSITIA. The agricultural scientists remain with the Department of Agriculture and much of the work, as I have mentioned before, undertaken by my department is actually a business unit delivering the science at the request of the relevant departments. The Chief Scientist is in charge of policy across whole-of-government and obviously I am working very closely with him. But the Science Delivery Division of DSITIA is the business unit where we basically hire our science out to different areas.

Mr MULHERIN: Fee-for-service, Minister?

Ms BATES: Exactly.

Mr MULHERIN: It is more costly this way rather than just being a policy unit.

Ms BATES: I believe it was a fee-for-service approach under your own government within DERM.

Mr MULHERIN: For other agencies, yes.

Ms BATES: Within DERM it was a fee-for-service within your own government.

Ms TRAD: I remain a little bit unsure. Your SDS claims that you will be coordinating with all of the relevant agencies scientific projects that go to the health and protection of the Great Barrier Reef. Given that your government has maintained that its position in terms of policy development and initiatives will be based on science, who is driving the scientific body of work that will be ongoing and that requires leadership if we are to maintain this No. 1 natural asset in Queensland? Who is driving the scientific coordination and projects?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously we do not work in silos like the former Labor government. The Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection, myself and also the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing actually, unlike your government, talk to each other around the cabinet table. We are together determining which programs need to be funded and they are not necessarily ones that your former government funded.

Ms TRAD: I understand.

Ms BATES: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet also coordinates the reef programs.

Ms TRAD: Sorry, say that again?

Ms BATES: The Department of the Premier and Cabinet also reports on the reef programs and is responsible for them. We do not operate in silos. My department, as I mentioned to you, has some 400 environmental and natural resource scientists, technical experts and administrative support staff. Their work supports the policy and management decision making and regulatory functions of a number of state government client departments including Environment and Heritage Protection, Natural Resources and Mines, Energy and Water Supply, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. The work program for the Science Delivery Division is largely determined by the requirements of those departments. It is on an as-needs and in-demand basis to meet their program needs and is negotiated through the development of additional and individual memorandums of understanding between my department and each of these client departments.

Funding for this work program comes both directly from DSITIA and its appropriation and from the allocation of funds from client departments. I have answered your question. We reiterate that unlike your government we do not operate in silos. We actually work together to determine what is the best scientific course of action with the best research, with the best scientists in Queensland, for the reef. It is not just a former Labor or Greens initiative. It is a fallacy that only your government cared about the Great Barrier Reef. Unlike your government we are actually going to look after the Great Barrier Reef and we do not need Greens preferences to do it.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Minister, for verballing the former government's achievements in relation to this.

Ms BATES: You're good at it.

Ms TRAD: Just in relation to the organ, machinery or process of government that makes sure that these departments are not working in silos, could you advise what that is?

Ms BATES: It is called the cabinet.

Ms TRAD: The whole of cabinet has specific sessions dedicated to the Great Barrier Reef, is that right?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question. I do not know what the former government did in cabinet. I would really love to have been a fly on the wall because then we would not have had debacles like the \$1.25 billion Health payroll debacle, we would not have ended up heading towards

\$85 billion in debt and we would not be paying \$650,000 an hour in interest. As I have mentioned before, we actually speak to each other around the cabinet table and we make decisions on behalf of Queenslanders collaboratively. It is a very different approach. I know that the member for Mackay is probably shaking his head because he sat around that cabinet table and he was also involved in making sure that this government had to pick up the debt that you left to Queenslanders.

I do not know how many times I have to spell it out for you: we have a cabinet, the cabinet makes the decisions. We actually talk to one another. We pick up the phone and speak to one another, we actually go and visit one another. We actually do make decisions on behalf of Queenslanders and we will be responsible for those decisions, unlike the former Labor government who the Queensland population is still waiting for an apology from.

Ms TRAD: In relation to your response to that answer, we have seen your government set up a powerful resources subcommittee to look at streamlining resources. Is there a similar organisational structure in place to look after the Great Barrier Reef considering responsibility has been spread over a number of departments, there seems to be no leadership and no coordination. How is this being coordinated through government?

Ms BATES: It is being coordinated through the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. As I mentioned—I do not know how many times I have to tell you—there is plenty of input from all of us. We do not operate in silos. I provide the scientific business side, I provide the research capability and the Premier and the other relevant ministers certainly are involved. If you want to ask a question about resources then I suggest you ask it to the minister.

Ms TRAD: There is a reference in your SDS to this.

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for South Brisbane, the time for non-government questions has come to an end. I call on the member for Lytton.

Mr SYMES: With recent cost-saving measures, can the Queensland government fulfil its obligations of providing information and advice on waves and storm tides during the 2012-13 cyclone season commencing on 1 November if the state were to experience a similar event to that of Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2011?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for Lytton for his question and welcome him here as well. It is great to see new faces around the committee table. The Queensland government is well placed to provide advice on extreme weather events should we experience another Yasi type event during the 2012-13 cyclone season. Through the Science Delivery Division, the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts continues to operate a network of 14 wave recording buoys and 25 storm tide gauges along the Queensland coastline. The majority of these sites have been recently inspected and serviced in readiness for the 2012-13 cyclone season.

Learnings that were gained from the Yasi event have been put into practice. For example, additional equipment to record barometric pressures has been installed in many of DSITIA's storm tide gauges, providing a significant improvement on their ability to report on the magnitude of future events as they unfold. Should a tropical cyclone pass close to one of these gauges this will most probably provide the most accurate record of the central pressure of the event. This is a vital piece of information in determining the destructive strength of the cyclone.

Another significant improvement since Cyclone Yasi is the upgrading of communications between DSITIA's wave recording buoys and storm tide gauges and its central computer systems to take advantage of improved systems provided by Telstra's Next G service. This upgrade will ensure better reliability in those critical times when emergency managers need to know what is happening. As it did so successfully during Cyclone Yasi, the Queensland government, through DSITIA, will continue to provide a storm tide advisory service to the State Disaster Coordination Centre, the Bureau of Meteorology and to local government. This is a service whereby specially trained DSITIA staff provide technical advice on the physical aspects of storm surge and destructive waves generated by a cyclone event. This is especially important to local government disaster managers in coastal areas under direct threat from the event.

During the lead-up to the cyclone season, DSITIA has worked closely with the Bureau of Meteorology to ensure that the threat from storm surge to Queensland coastal communities is minimised as much as possible. This is achieved through a close collaboration and a sharing of knowledge and information between the two organisations. Immediately following a tropical cyclone event, DSITIA staff are well prepared to undertake field surveys of affected coastal areas. These field surveys enable the collection of information about the extent of physical processes that have an impact on Queensland coastal communities. Despite recent cost-saving measures and other changes taking place within the Queensland public sector, the Queensland public can be confident that the government is prepared and we will provide information and advice on waves and storm tides during the 2012-13 cyclone season.

CHAIR: As I live in the cyclone area, I am relieved to hear that. Minister, is the SLATS program for monitoring tree and land cover across the state still being undertaken?

Ms BATES: As I mentioned, we are focused on evidence based policy formulation and evaluation. The SLATS program has provided accurate information using satellite imagery about the extent of forest and woodland in Queensland and changes over time since 1988. These spatial data sets and summary statistics produced by SLATS are highly regarded and are available on the Department of Natural Resource and Mines website to interested stakeholders, including government agencies, peak industry bodies and environmental and community groups.

Over 50 per cent of Queensland or approximately 88.2 million hectares has woodland or forest cover. Subtle changes to the density of forests and woodlands over such a vast area could have significant impacts on agricultural production and biodiversity. These digital data sets showing forest and woodland extent and density across Queensland are essential information for natural resource management. They not only support the vegetation management framework, but also are important for developing regional plans and identifying biodiversity values, and they are increasingly used for property planning.

There is no question that SLATS has generated a world-class archive of satellite imagery, which is widely used by government agencies, industry groups, regional natural resource management groups and research organisations. The satellite imagery is used by DSITIA for a range of applications, including the monitoring of ground cover, the mapping of fire scars, regional ecosystems, wetlands and land-use changes. The imagery is corrected for variations in sun angles throughout the year, topographical effects and atmospheric changes using the latest available knowledge. As a result of these corrections, the imagery is seamless and consistent over time, making it suitable for automated image classification techniques.

The SLATS methodology for mapping the extent of woody vegetation as it changes over time is well established and accepted by government, stakeholders and the community. The methods have been independently reviewed, published in peer reviewed literature and are internationally recognised. In fact, several other states and territories have implemented similar approaches and there is significant international interest in the application of these methods outside of Australia. My department will continue to undertake the SLATS program on behalf of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines to ensure that government decision making is underpinned by the most up-to-date information about the effectiveness of the vegetation management framework and any recent and potential future amendments. An example is that SLATS data has been used to measure the quantum of tree-clearing activities that were undertaken within the vegetation management framework, either under permit or considered as good practice, such as clearing for fire breaks.

The current research priority for SLATS is the development of methods using time series satellite imagery to detect and map subtle vegetation changes across Queensland, such as woody thickening and encroachments. SLATS can also be used as a tool to identify clearing activities that may be environmentally damaging and unlawful. It is undertaken in a very consultative manner. The SLATS reference group provides feedback about the program, has input regarding decisions, direction and methods, and assists with the communication of results to industry and the wider community.

Mr BENNETT: The government has released the latest land use map in the reef catchment areas. What is the next priority and how will these resources be used to support regional planning in the state?

Ms BATES: Land use and land management practices have a profound impact on Queensland's natural resources, particularly agricultural production and the environment. The availability of consistent and accurate land use information is critical to securing agricultural productivity and sustainable natural resource management, which are vital considerations for the ongoing prosperity of regional communities. The Queensland Land Use Mapping Program maps and assesses patterns of land use and land use change across the state.

The program is undertaken primarily by my department, with assistance from eight regional officers of the Department of Natural Resources and Mines. It provides spatial data about the extent of cropping, horticulture, grazing, residential areas and other land uses. Data availability is widely used by government agencies, industries, community groups and research organisations. Examples of these applications include catchment modelling to understand sediment, nutrient and water flows; quality flows discharged to the Great Barrier Reef; developing vulnerability maps as part of the South-East Queensland Regional Coastal Management Plan; identifying priorities for investments and extension work by state and federal government agencies and regional natural resource management groups; and biosecurity, identifying potential locations of citrus cancer outbreaks and evaluating the risk of disease spread across banana plantations in North Queensland. Also, it monitors and evaluates natural resource impacts following natural disasters, including the recent tropical cyclones, Larry and Yasi.

Accurate and reliable spatial data about land use is critical for defining important agricultural land. The spatial land use data sets are currently being used by policy and planning groups for a number of government priorities, including the development of statutory regional plans and an agricultural land audit being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It also provides valuable data sets for the mining sector.

The land use maps in a number of catchments in South-East Queensland are only current to 1999. Given the high rates of change in those areas, the updating of the land use maps in South-East Queensland is seen as a priority and commenced in September 2012. The priorities for land use mapping are driven by regional planning needs and other government priorities, the currency of the mapping for the particular area of interest and the availability of suitable satellite or aerial imagery. The prioritisation and resourcing of areas to be updated are considered and determined by DSITIA and the Department of Natural Resources and Mines.

The digital land use data sets for Queensland are available on the Queensland government information service portal and can be downloaded in a suitable format for geographical information systems software. Land use summary statistics and reports are available on the web page accessible via the DNRM website. This includes recent reports for the catchment adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef, stretching from the Wet Tropics in the north to the Burnett/Mary in the south. This is a great example of Queensland government departments working together. DSITIA has a lead role in the coordination, research and development, and training, and undertakes mapping and the administration of the program. DNRM regional staff have a critical role in capturing the local and expert knowledge used to detect and map the land use changes. This is also part of the Australian Collaborative Land Use and Management Program, which promotes nationally consistent land use information through the use of agreed land use classification and mapping methodologies. All states and territories are partners in this national program.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, what science is being used to support the agricultural land audit?

Ms BATES: The Queensland government's agricultural land audit is identifying land important to current and future agricultural production across Queensland. It is one of our four pillars. It will provide information on the location, extent and character of existing productive agricultural land and will identify areas with potential for future development. It will also provide information on current and future constraints on the agricultural potential for land. The results of the audit will be presented in statewide and regional formats by March 2013.

The project is heavily reliant on information provided by the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts on current land use and the potential of land for future agricultural use. Staff within DSITIA's Science Delivery Division are at the forefront in mapping land use and assessing land use potential, with the best information expertise being used to support the agricultural land audit. As I mentioned, DSITIA's Queensland Land Use Mapping Program provides the comprehensive and consistent mapping of areas that are currently used for agriculture. It has produced a baseline data set of land use for 1999 and has identified specific land use types, such as broad acre cropping, grazing and forestry for the whole of Queensland. Portions of the state were remapped in 2006 and 2009. The mapping is consistent with the national standards established by the Australian Land Use and Management classification.

A major outcome from the agricultural land audit will be the map that shows the potential for future agricultural land use in Queensland. Scientists from DSITIA and the Department of Natural Resource and Mines with expert knowledge in soil and land resource assessments are identifying areas of potential production. This is based on the wealth of information on the characteristics of land and soil for much of Queensland provided by DSITIA. The land and soils information is being used to assign areas to agricultural land classes. This is to provide a consistent statewide basis for evaluating land potential. The agricultural land class approach has been applied throughout the state to interpret land resource information for use in strategic land use planning. It is based on a four-tier hierarchy, ranging from class A, which is arable land, through to class D, which is land that is unsuitable for agriculture. The audit is combining ALC mapping with information about other land resource constraints, such as land slope and rainfall, to identify areas with a combination of physical and natural characteristics suited to particular forms of agriculture. The audit is also using information about social and economic factors, such as transport, water supply infrastructure and proximity to townships, to identify areas where the supply of key inputs such as water, labour or access to markets or processing facilities are currently constraining agricultural development.

The audit is being led by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It demonstrates the government's commitment to use the best available science and decision-support tools to identify suitable land for future food production. The audit report will include a statewide overview in 12 chapters, one for the result in each regional planning area. Draft reports for each individual region, as well as a statewide overview, will be provided to the government in early 2013. A technical report will also be produced describing the method, listing the data sets used and outlining any assumptions. The audit will apply a fit-for-purpose method to develop products that are consistent across the whole state

and are suitable for regional planning and strategic decisions. In line with the constrained time and resources available, the method will be a desktop exercise using existing data sets or data developed from existing data sets. Those data sets will be analysed using existing tools and expert knowledge in a simple geographical information system.

CHAIR: I call the member for Waterford, but the minister will have about one and a half minutes to answer.

Mr LATTER: Thank you, Minister. I will be gentle, I promise. What is this government doing to support tropical health research in Queensland?

Ms BATES: Obviously, the member knows my background in health. I have a strong interest in tropical health medicine. Just recently I was lucky enough to visit the campuses at Cairns and Townsville, to talk about the concerns that they have about diseases including dengue fever and a more imminent threat, not only to Queenslanders but to people across the whole of the country, which is the tuberculosis threat that is coming from Papua New Guinea. You would be well aware that Australia has been TB free for many, many years, but there are some rather resistant and virile strains apparently coming from Papua New Guinea, which put not only Queenslanders but also the rest of the country at risk.

To answer the question about what our government is doing to support health research, we are rebuilding the state's practical and applied scientific and technological capability to meet the challenges of a modern economy. It is one of Queensland's major priorities. The government is committed to boosting Queensland's scientific research by providing support to enable our researchers and businesses, as I have mentioned, to use their knowledge, their creativity and their innovation to drive our economic growth and, specifically, to support the four economic pillars of the state.

In the area of tropical health, the Queensland government has committed to \$42.12 million to establish the Australian Institute for Tropical Health and Medicine in conjunction with James Cook University. Based in the tropical north, James Cook University is ideally placed to host the institute which is proposed for establishment over three sites in North Queensland—Townsville, Cairns and the Torres Strait.

It is intended that the institute will focus on: strengthening Queensland's tropical health defences; increasing our ability to combat biosecurity risks; training health workers particularly in relation to disease surveillance and control and risk identification; developing diagnostic, preventative and treatment protocols for both tropical diseases with high incursion risks and diseases that have high incidences in regional tropical areas; building an integrated health security network to address significant biosecurity threats; funding research to address current treats—as I mentioned, diseases such as dengue fever, TB, avian influenza, rabies and the Hendra virus, which I am sure the member for the Mackay is still very interested in—to avoid public health emergencies; and discovering ways to limit, prevent and decrease endemic infectious diseases and their transmission to Australians, particularly those living in the tropics. Just recently I met with some researchers who have done some fantastic work with dengue fever which we will be announcing in the next couple of weeks.

CHAIR: This concludes our consideration of the portfolio of Science and Information Technology.

Proceedings suspended from 6.31 pm to 6.34 pm

CHAIR: I will now move to the portfolio of Innovation and the Arts. I would like to acknowledge and welcome the chief executive officers of the Queensland Art Gallery, Ms Suhanya Raffel; the Queensland Museum, Dr Ian Galloway; the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Mr John Kotzas; the Queensland Theatre Company, Ms Sue Donnelly; the State Library of Queensland, Ms Janette Wright; Screen Queensland Pty Ltd, Mr Bryan Lowe; and the director-general—all of whom may be asked questions directly by committee. To begin our questioning in this area, I call the member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: Minister, I refer to your answer to non-government question on notice No. 3 regarding the loss of staff in your department. Can you advise whether you consider the employment of a 25-year-old on \$103,000 a year in a job without competitive selection in a field where he has no qualifications or experience while other experienced public servants are getting sacked a hand up or a handout?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Obviously I cannot comment on anybody else's staffing issues in their departments.

Ms TRAD: I thought it was a policy question. Minister, your government is all about a hand up not a handout. It is a government policy issue.

CHAIR: Member for South Brisbane, you did ask for an opinion.

Ms TRAD: An opinion about government policy and the implementation of the government policy. I will go on. Minister, I refer you to Budget Paper No. 4, page 63 specifically, where it indicates a \$12.4 million cut over the next four years for arts grants programs. I also table a copy of the answer to question on notice No. 572 where I asked about what programs had been cut and the dollar amounts. Minister, in that response you did not detail what programs had been cut. I seek leave to table that response to the question on notice.

CHAIR: Is there any objection to the tabling of that response. There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Ms TRAD: Can you outline where in the budget papers it provides a breakdown of any funding allocations that will be cut and the programs and services which the funding is related to?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. In 2012-13 there will be \$41.2 million invested in artists, art and cultural organisations and projects. As you would be aware, this includes \$6 million over the next four years to implement the Arts for all Queenslanders policy. As part of the government's commitment to return the budget to surplus, the art+place Public Art Fund will cease from October 2012, delivering savings of \$7.56 million over the next two years.

As you have mentioned, an additional \$12.4 million in savings has been identified over the next four years. This is made up of grants over a four-year period—2012 to 2016. We have set up an arts investment advisory board which will be established to look at available funding and existing grant categories. It will streamline how the government actually invests in individual artists, art and cultural organisations and projects into the future.

My department has contributed to the government's fiscal repair agenda through a number of reforms and savings initiatives. As I said, these include achieving savings of \$12.9 million in 2011-12 and delivering on fiscal repair and election commitment savings of \$8 million in 2012-13 or \$45.6 million over the forward estimates, operating savings measures of \$48.3 million in 2012-13 or \$100.3 million over the forward estimates and capital saving measures of \$5.1 million in 2012-13.

I note your question about cuts to the arts grants. I would like to assure the honourable member that, unlike what was being bandied about and being written in the *Australian*, there have been no cuts to the majors at all. The reason we have to establish a grants investment advisory board is because of the incredible waste of arts grants that occurred right across the portfolio. We have instances where grants of \$10,000 were made up of \$5,000 in administration costs. I find that absolutely extraordinary.

We have had a restructure of Arts Queensland. Can I put on record that Arts Queensland have done an absolutely fantastic job. If you want an example of change management and transition into a much better run, well oiled machine then you need to look no further than Arts Queensland. I would like to compliment the staff for their efforts. They have identified wasteful practices in their own organisation. They have got on board.

We have a new grants officer who is there specifically to work with the small to medium groups. As I have mentioned before, I have had numerous arts round tables. One of the biggest concerns was that they could not even access the grants. Some of the grants were 40 pages long and some of the smaller organisations had no idea what to do so they threw their hands up in the air and did not apply. This grants officer is a dedicated grants officer for Arts Queensland. It will certainly make it much easier for the small to medium groups to apply.

On top of that, with our approach of a hand up not a handout she is working closely with AbaF and the Australia Council to identify philanthropic donors and business donors. I am sure any government would like to make sure that it has partnerships with the private sector so it is not covering everything.

As I mentioned, I believe the department has done a terrific job. I believe with the arts investment board we will be able to allocate funds more appropriately. Instead of having 15 or so different arts grants where there was an additional cost on top, this will be a much more streamlined process. We are not going to be putting square pegs in round holes which is what the arts programs were before. In fact, many of the arts groups have said to me that they had to change the way they did things just to squeeze themselves in to access a grant. I would like to see that change.

It is a classic example of where Labor saw their arts priorities and where we see ours. I envisage good outcomes with better business practices and certainly the involvement and enthusiasm of Arts Queensland. I have met with most in the arts community—I do not know who I would not have met with in the arts area. I have had something like five round tables with the arts community. Working together we are going to make sure that we cut the waste that was in the arts. As an example, we saw \$5,000 to administer a \$10,000 grant. Imagine how much money we could save over the \$40 million odd of arts grants that are still available.

Ms TRAD: Minister, thank you for filling in so much time actually not answering the question. You claim that there is a lot of duplication, you claim that there is a lot of waste, but then you refuse to actually document it through answering a question on notice in full. Again I ask you for the details of those organisations where arts grants have been given for a particular purpose—and even if you would like to pull out the highlighter and show me where the duplication and excessive administration is, that would be handy? For the benefit of the committee and for the benefit of the arts community in Queensland, it might also be nice if you would table one of these supposed 40-page applications that you constantly refer to.

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have been very busy in the arts community. I think I worked out the other day that per week I either attend or meet with someone in the arts community on average five times a week. From my recollection, as the shadow minister for the arts, you have been at two functions that I have been at.

Ms TRAD: I have been more in the last 10 years than you have, by your own admission in public, quite embarrassingly.

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the interjection and you have been quite noticeable by your absence. We have been working very hard together in Arts Queensland. We took over an area where there was a lot of inefficiency. I find your comment insulting to the staff of Arts Queensland who have worked really hard to identify their own—

Ms TRAD: Point of order. Do not verbal me. It is actually not a reflection on the arts department, it is a reflection on you. These are your statements, back them up, Minister.

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question. Unlike the former Labor government, we are not going to continue wasteful spending. Let me give an example of one. What about the art+place grants?

Ms TRAD: I am talking about the community arts grants.

Ms BATES: Let me finish.

CHAIR: Order, member for South Brisbane.

Ms TRAD: I am talking about the community arts grants, Minister.

Ms BATES: \$800,000 of wasted taxpayers' money on a pile of rocks with a couple of vines hanging out of it in a hinterland national park—

Ms TRAD: Minister, page 63 of Budget Paper No. 4—answer that question.

CHAIR: Order.

Ms BATES: I would like to know how you could possibly justify that that was not a waste of taxpayer's funds.

Ms TRAD: Answer this question, Minister.

CHAIR: Could I remind the member for South Brisbane that the minister is answering the question. It is not correct to be interrupting and interjecting all the time.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Madam Chair, but with all due respect the minister was not answering the question. I am not talking about the art+place grant program.

CHAIR: Member, excuse me. Member for South Brisbane, the minister is able to answer the question as she wishes and that is the minister's choice.

Ms TRAD: I am not sure that it goes to transparency and accountability in government to allow that sort of behaviour to occur.

Ms BATES: I am happy to take the member's question on notice because obviously she wants more detail than what has been supplied in the question on notice. I am happy to take it on notice, Madam Chair.

Ms TRAD: Thank you. Minister, you claimed on ABC Radio that your two main arts policies are the \$3 million Super Star Fund and the \$3 million Regional Arts Fund, both totalling \$6 million. Minister, effectively you have stripped away \$12.4 million, as detailed on page 63 of Budget Paper No. 4. This is effectively to pay for your election commitments. So what has happened to the other \$6.4 million?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. What we did do when we were looking at the budget was to reduce wasteful programs that your government had presided over. In 2012-13, \$41.2 million will be invested in artists, arts and cultural organisations and projects. This includes \$6 million over the next four years to implement the Arts for all Queenslanders policy. As part of the government's commitment to return the budget to surplus, the art+place Public Art Fund will cease from October 2012, delivering savings of \$7.56 million over the next two years.

An additional \$12.4 million in savings has been identified over the next four years. The savings to be made in the arts+place program represent future grants rounds from 2012-13, which was \$4 million, and 2013-14, which was \$3.56 million, which have not yet commenced and for which no applications have yet been received. The \$12.4 million in savings is to be made from arts grants over the four years from 2012 to 2016. An arts investment advisory board, as I have already mentioned, is being established to look at the available funding and existing grant categories and to streamline how the government invests in individual artists, arts and cultural organisations and projects into the future. Grants already approved and committed for 2012-13 will proceed as contracted and therefore there should be no organisation denied funding for which they had already received confirmation of any successful application.

I have already mentioned before that we have honoured the tripartite agreements, particularly those with the federal government. Also, with local council, the RADF and IRADF grants have all been honoured. The department is committed to simplifying and reducing the number of grant categories, and the identified savings will be drawn from across art from all areas and across the new grant categories for individual artists, organisations and projects so that arts and the cultural sector as a whole can continue to thrive. It is all part of our government's drive to bring the budget back into surplus. All expenditure has been examined including funding for the arts. We are going to restore the public finances.

Ms TRAD: Well read. Minister, you keep referring to the arts grants advisory board or the arts investment advisory board. Are these two separate boards?

Ms BATES: Sorry I missed the question.

Ms TRAD: You are part of a government that is obviously championing cutting red tape and bureaucracy. Are you going to establish an arts grants advisory board, as outlined on page 6 of the SDS, and an arts investment advisory board, as you outlined on ABC Radio on 11 October?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question but I think you are confusing the fact that it is an arts investment advisory board. There is only one board. It is will be established and hopefully we will have an interim board up and running so we can open up the Super Star Fund applications.

This one board will help to streamline services and reduce red tape in the arts by reviewing every aspect of government spending and investment in the arts. The board will assist me to make sure that funding goes where it should go, where it will have the greatest impact on the growth and viability of the arts sector and, most importantly, where it has the greatest impact on the lives of all Queenslanders. Board members will have expertise in the arts and also in business and finance, legal and governance, art policy and grants administration, philanthropy, education, media and communications.

The board will be driven by our government's commitment to deliver more arts for Queensland communities. I anticipate that this board will probably meet about four to six times a year. At the moment I actually had to take back the executive power of grants administration because any grant under \$100,000 was just signed off without my knowledge, and to my knowledge there could have been—there was not but there could have been—situations where \$99,000 was signed off 10 times the week before.

The difference with the board will be that we are no longer paying 80 peer group people around the country, many of whom do not live in Queensland, who are making decisions on how Queenslanders' money is best spent. We are about arts for all Queenslanders and I want to see that we get value for money. The board will also ensure that we do not have another Joel Barlow situation. The amounts that will be given out through the board will be checked the following year to see what economic impact they had. Obviously the artistic impact is subjective.

I will give you another example of Labor's appalling waste and financial mismanagement. The Bligh government organised a \$1.06 million giant elephant to be installed outside the Gallery of Modern Art. It is a shocking misuse of taxpayer dollars. We are talking about a five-metre high, upside down elephant looking at a water rat, and I table the document for the committee's consideration.

CHAIR: Minister, are you seeking leave?

Ms BATES: Yes, I request leave to table the document.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms BATES: We are talking about a five-metre high, upside down elephant looking at a water rat. It is this kind of reckless spending that drove Queensland into a spiral of debt. More than \$1 million was spent on this single piece of art, commissioned by an artist who does not live in Queensland or even Australia for that matter. This is certainly not a smear on the artist or his sculpture. However, the state government funding would have been better spent helping the Queensland arts sector. Imagine what could have been delivered in the sector if large purchases like this did not swallow up so much money.

The sculpture is currently in New Zealand. It will be shipped out from Auckland later this month. The transportation and installation of this piece is estimated to cost taxpayers more than \$200,000. Unfortunately the advice I have received is that there is no way I can reverse the decision at this late stage, so Queenslanders must foot the bill.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I go back to my question. In the transcript of your interview with Spencer Howson one morning just last week, on 11 October, you talk about an arts investment advisory board. I seek leave to table the transcript for the benefit of the committee.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Ms TRAD: But your SDS talks about an arts grants advisory board. Are these two boards or one board, Minister?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. In case you did not understand the first time, the answer is that there is only one board and it is obviously a typographical error. So I think even you can get your head around that.

Ms TRAD: I think, Minister, you did not know what you were talking about on radio.

CHAIR: I would remind the—

Ms TRAD: I respectfully submit the transcript where you actually said it. It is not a typo.

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for her interjections. I am happy to have a look at what I said in the transcript. But I know, as does everybody else, that there is only one grants advisory board and we would not need a grants advisory board if your former government had not spend ridiculous amounts of money on ridiculous artworks. The art+place program was cut because we expect that developers of future buildings in Queensland would consider some artistic work themselves as part of the tender process.

We are going to continue to make sure that we have savings in the arts. I really do not understand why the member for South Brisbane cannot get it into her head that her former government made so many mistakes with arts policies and arts grants. Even their former department are working really closely and doing a fantastic job to make sure that all of the processes within government cost less money. That means that we can give more money to people in the arts.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That brings the first round of questioning to an end. I now call the member for Lytton.

Mr SYMES: Can the minister please provide an update of the Premier of Queensland's sculpture commission?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for the question but I think I have already answered that. That was the upside down elephant. It is certainly a classic example of yet another one of Anna Bligh's white elephants. It goes along with the ski jump in the middle of the tropics. It is just mind blowing the amount of money that has been wasted. I think every day I am shocked at how many skeletons fall out of the closet, particularly IT skeletons. I am just flabbergasted that we have spent all of this time so far in estimates and not one question has been asked of me about IT. This is an area where this government spends, I believe, about \$1.2 billion a year. I think that works out to be \$100 million a minute—

Ms TRAD: I raise a point of order, Madam Chair. Is this the arts section of the estimates hearing or is this the IT section?

Ms BATES: My understanding is that you can ask any question. I am sure I saw that in the *Hansard* from the member for South Brisbane the other day.

Ms TRAD: I was overruled on that.

CHAIR: I am unaware that the member for South Brisbane was overruled.

Ms BATES: I am happy to take any questions on IT.

Ms TRAD: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is pretty consistent that there are different sets of rules for different MPs in this House.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms BATES: That is a reflection on the chair.

CHAIR: I would remind the member for South Brisbane that personal reflections are disorderly. Can the minister please outline what support is provided to Queensland writers?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is always good to get things on the record in *Hansard*. Certainly in reference to the Queensland Literary Awards that was funding that was not taken from the arts; that was funding from the former Premier's department. Of course, with the machinery-of-government changes, I took over the arts.

This government has commenced discussions with the writing sector about the best way to support Queensland literary talent into the future. Previously there has been a large amount of funding for awards which went towards administration. This government is now looking at how to reduce red tape and provide more direct services to Queensland writers. The government continues to support a wide range of writing activities across the state, including drama and poetry awards—I presented the recent poetry awards. The young writers program is investing almost \$1 million in operational support for writing organisations and festivals in 2012 alone.

Part of this government's investment this year has been for the following awards: \$15,000 per annum to the poetry awards, the Thomas Shapcott prize for an unpublished poetry manuscript open to Queensland entrants and the Val Vallis Poetry Award for an unpublished poem open to Australian entrants. There was also \$50,000 per annum towards the Poet in Residence. During this residency the poet works with communities and poets across Queensland and performs at the annual Queensland Poetry Festival and Brisbane Writers Festival. There was an amount of \$255,000 over two years

towards the Queensland Premier's Drama Award. This is the only playwrighting award in Australia to guarantee a professional production of the winning entry. I was thrilled to be able to present the prize to a young Queensland writer, Maxine Mellor, for the play *Trollop*, which is going to be performed at the Cremorne with Wesley Enoch assisting as well. I am really looking forward to that. She was incredibly surprised to have won it. In fact, she was encouraged to enter the award as she did not think her work may have been quite ready.

There is also \$160,000 per annum towards the Writers Room program, which supports the development of film or television scripts by Queenslanders. An amount of \$10,000 per annum is provided by the State Library towards the Young Writers Award, which is open to Queensland entrants. Additionally, in 2012 the government is investing in operational support for writing organisations. This includes the Queensland Writers Centre for \$372,924; the Brisbane Writers Festival, \$309,000—and I was very pleased to attend the Brisbane Writers Festival and open that officially—the Queensland Poetry Festival, \$65,000; the University of Queensland Press for \$100,000; *Griffith Review* for \$40,000; \$100,000 for the regional writing initiatives in partnership with the Australian government which also provides \$100,000.

In addition, Screen Queensland works continuously with writers directly and indirectly in film and TV scripting from conception to final product. Screen Queensland invested \$1.4 million in script project funding to writers and producers—writer teams—in 2012, an increase of 30 per cent over 2011. Screen Queensland provides significant support to Queensland writers through direct investment and professional development. Screen Queensland directly supports the process of writing adaptations each year through the \$40,000 Chauvel Award each year launched at the Brisbane Writers Festival and announced at the Brisbane International Film Festival.

Screen Queensland's support of Queensland writers has seen a highly successful conversion rate of local writing from scripts to funded productions. An example of this is *The Strange Calls*, which is the all-Queensland multiplatform comedy series just taken up by the major US network ABC as a pilot which was invested in at concept level. I understand that it is screening on television tonight on ABC2. The Newman government looks forward to continuing to build our investment in the writing sector to grow the economy and lower unemployment. Thank you for the question.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, would you please provide an update on the success of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I had the pleasure of attending CIAF. It was a very interesting couple of days. I certainly enjoyed the time there and the incredible work that the Arts Queensland team put into CIAF. It was also obviously co-funded by my colleague Jann Stuckey, the Minister for Tourism and Major Events. I also had the pleasure of having two local Cairns members there, the member for Cairns, Gavin King, and of course Michael Trout, the member for Barron River.

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair provides a high profile marketplace and showcase for the work of Queensland Indigenous artists. Funding for CIAF will continue as part of the Backing Indigenous Arts initiative, which runs to 2014-15. It delivers great outcomes. It generates income for artists, galleries and Indigenous centres. It also boosts tourism and the local economy. It celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture and it hosts state and national Indigenous arts industry forums.

I was very interested to see how many businesses up in Cairns are happy to continue support and have pledged either in-kind support or future financial support for CIAF. That augurs well for the continuation of CIAF into the future. You may or may not be aware that we have a review underway to identify options for the review of CIAF. That review is actually being done by Events Queensland. It is looking at business and governance models. That final report is due in November 2012. I am looking forward to the different options that could be identified. Again, it is more about a hand up than a hand-out. It was terrific to see the business communities come on board to support this because it is a big tourist boost for Cairns. As I mentioned, it was terrific to see the support that Gavin King and Michael Trout offered and how well they have become ensconced in the local business communities since their election. I am sure that they will continue to fly the LNP flag up there.

Without pre-empting the outcome of the report, I can say that I believe this event, CIAF, will be best delivered outside of government because events management is not the core business of Arts Queensland. However, there is funding available into the future. I will be working closely with the business community and the Indigenous community to continue to fund this with philanthropic state and business initiatives. As I mentioned, this review is also consulting with stakeholders on whether CIAF needs to be held every year or every second year. My understanding is that, under the Labor government, it was an event that was to be held every two years. That is what the initial funding was for, but it has been held every year since then.

The outcomes for CIAF for 2012 are interesting. There were some 11,545 visitors who attended CIAF 2012. The sale of artworks amounted to some \$600,000, which is an increase of \$20,000 over last year. From a tourism perspective, 2,329 visitor nights were directly attributable to CIAF in 2012. The economic impact of this three days of CIAF 2012 on Cairns and other parts of Queensland was some

\$1.4 million. Of visitors, 87 per cent rated CIAF as good or excellent and 83 per cent said CIAF increased their understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and cultures. For me one of the highlights of CIAF was meeting an Indigenous artist for whom I had just signed off on some funding for his local community. It was terrific to actually meet him in the flesh. He was very excited to be able to recognise the contribution from the state government. The dancing was terrific. I certainly look forward to future CIAFs.

As I mentioned, the partnership between CIAF and Ports North is a Queensland finalist for the Australian Business Arts Foundation award in 2012. Ports North provides some fantastic support, both in kind and monetary, for the continuation of CIAF. There are opportunities, as I mentioned, for business and industry to really get behind this unique event and there are some untapped opportunities for developing Indigenous cultural tourism in Far North Queensland. People and curators came from as far as Germany to have a look at some of the artwork at CIAF. I look forward to future business and industry involvement for the future of CIAF.

Mr PUCCI: Minister, can you please outline some of the cultural highlights for Queensland in 2012-13?

Ms BATES: I thank the member for Logan for the question. We certainly have had some wonderful highlights that I have been to already in 2012 and I am looking forward to 2013. In fact, last night I went to the season preview launch for Opera Queensland and I am really looking forward to seeing those performances. On Sunday I went to the Queensland Theatre Company's launch as well. I have already earmarked a couple of things that I would really like to see.

This government is committed to making Queensland a cultural hub by revitalising arts services and continuing to develop Queensland as a cultural tourism destination as one of our four pillars. Queensland continues to grow its reputation for staging blockbuster art events that attract record numbers of Queenslanders and interstate and international visitors. The last six major international exhibitions at the Queensland Art Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art attracted around 960,000 visitors, one-third of whom were from interstate and overseas. I have already highlighted the successes of some of these, but I certainly would like to single out a number of them, including *Portrait of Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado*. I managed to attend something like four different events there at the Prado so I know it pretty well. I had the privilege of opening *Mummy: Secrets of the Tomb*, which was absolutely extraordinary. In fact, I think I had only been the minister for a week. An Egyptologist was out from the British Museum. The Queensland Museum had put out a couple of Pyrrhus pieces that they had lovingly kept in pristine condition for over a hundred years. The Egyptologist was walking along and realised that we actually had some pieces of the *The Book of the Dead*, which was a famous Pyrrhus manuscript and the Queensland Museum here in Brisbane had actually been holding on to these pieces for a hundred years. What was a great exhibition here in Queensland became a world-wide phenomenon because it is not every day that an Egyptologist wanders into the local museum and discovers something like this. So I say kudos to the curators of the museum for being able to keep something that significant in Egyptian history. Because I was actually there to witness it, I was very excited about that.

I have just talked about the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. There is, of course, a plethora of other major arts events and international exhibitions which are going to be supported by the Newman government, and I would like to mention a few of those. The Brisbane Festival that has just been held is an annual event that was held from 8 to 29 September 2012 and for which my department provided \$5.29 million in funding. Highlights this year included a record 90-plus sell-out performances and box office takings in excess of \$1.2 million. There was the sold-out performance of *Boundary Street*, which told the story of wartime Brisbane, and free events such as the Santos GLNG City of Lights, Sunsuper Riverfire and Symphony Under the Stars. From my understanding it was a fabulous festival. The Treasurer, Tim Nicholls, opened the festival and John-Paul Langbroek closed the festival on my behalf because it is fairly obvious that that was during the time that I was either in hospital or recovering from my surgery. I look forward to next year. The Queensland Art Gallery—

Ms TRAD: Jann Stuckey actually opened it, a clarification.

Ms BATES: I think that Tim Nicholls was also there. The Queensland Art Gallery and Gallery of Modern Art will present the 7th Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art from 8 December 2012 to 14 April 2013. This flagship contemporary art event features 77 artists from 27 countries. There is also the Hamburg Season at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre as part of the QPAC international series, which is a four-year partnership between the Queensland Performing Arts Centre and Events Queensland to deliver exclusive, world-class events drawing national and international attention to Brisbane. The Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Hamburg Ballet and the Hamburg State Opera appeared as part of the international series with performances from 23 August to 5 September 2012. I was thrilled to actually attend the Hamburg Ballet and I listened to the simulcast for the Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra. This event was a coup for Queensland, with 250 of the world's greatest musicians, singers and dancers on stage. A performance by the Hamburg Philharmonic Orchestra was simulcast to six venues in regional Queensland on 24 August.

It is no wonder QPAC has attracted a million visitors this year, with shows like *Mary Poppins* breaking ticket sales records and *Jersey Boys* attracting sell-out crowds. For those who have not been to *Jersey Boys*, I would certainly recommend it. It is no wonder, as I said, that QPAC has attracted so many millions of visitors. Coming attractions including *A Chorus Line*, *Driving Miss Daisy* and the Queensland Ballet's *The Sleeping Beauty*, presented with the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, will no doubt see the crowds keep on coming.

Swell Sculpture Festival is obviously a highlight in the electorate of Currumbin. I am well aware of this annual sculpture exhibition along the Currumbin Beach shoreline which attracts annual funding of \$70,000 from Arts Queensland's s2m funding program. Minister Stuckey opened Swell festival obviously because that is her local electorate.

We also have the upcoming Woodford Folk Festival. The Queensland Folk Federation will be presenting the annual Woodford Folk Festival from 27 December to 1 January. Unfortunately, I will be away during that time but the Hon. Andrew Powell will be officially opening that festival as it is held in his own electorate. Arts Queensland provided the federation with \$144,200 in 2012 as part of triennial funding through the s2m program.

We also have the Australian Festival of Chamber Music, which is an annual event held each July in Townsville. Arts Queensland provided the Australian Festival of Chamber Music with \$110,000 in annual funding in 2012 through the s2m program.

This abundance of arts and cultural events in Queensland demonstrates our government's commitment to the arts for all Queenslanders that will enhance the state's reputation as a destination to experience innovating, exciting and inspiring arts and culture. I will have to correct the member for South Brisbane: Minister Stuckey opened the Santos GLNG City of Lights and Minister Tim Nicholls, the Treasurer, opened the Brisbane Festival.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you claim that you are the first whole-of-government ICT minister. Does that mean you have whole-of-government ICT responsibility?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I have been waiting six months for a question from the opposition—

Mr MULHERIN: Have you got whole-of-government ICT responsibility?

Ms BATES:—spokesperson for ICT. I really do thank you.

Mr MULHERIN: Well, we have had bigger fish to fry.

Ms BATES: It is extraordinary that you have waited until there is not very much time left for IT, which, as I mentioned earlier, is a \$1.2 billion spend for the Queensland government—

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, do you have whole-of-government responsibility?

Ms BATES: I am getting to the answer, trust me. I am going to be enjoying it. When I sat on the other side of these tables last year and I asked the then minister, Simon Finn—

Mr MULHERIN: But you are the minister now.

Ms BATES: Let us look at some of the debacles. About Queensland public sector ICT I was given a very rosy portrait. In fact, I distinctly remember him telling me that the IDES email system was not a waste of money. Indeed, I was told that by any objective measure it was a success.

I also asked questions of the former government about the Health payroll debacle. I have been the ICT minister for six months, yet there has been not one question from the shadow IT minister about the Health payroll debacle. Tonight I am not going to paint a deluded, rosy picture; I am going to update the committee on the government's significant ICT difficulties, which were left to us by the Beattie and Bligh Labor governments.

Mr MULHERIN: So you have whole-of-government ICT responsibility?

Ms BATES: I am the minister for IT. At this stage, we are doing IT audit across the whole of government, which is something that your government was never game to do because it would have shown all of the debacles that you have left us with. As I said, I am not going to sit here and paint a rosy, deluded picture and I am not going to lie to the people of Queensland like the former government did.

I did say in opposition that one of the first things we would do upon forming government was to initiate the most comprehensive ICT audit in Queensland public sector history. The independent audit is already telling us a very difficult story of ICT than former minister Finn and his former ministerial colleagues told at the last estimates hearing. While the audit will not be handed down until 31 October, there are some interesting interim figures that have been brought to my attention that particularly concern me and that I am more than happy to share with the member for Mackay.

More than half—approximately 53 per cent, or 997—of the Queensland government's ICT systems could be considered legacy. It will cost between \$3.7 billion and \$6 billion to replace these systems—not quite such a rosy picture now, is it? About 10 per cent of these systems are in such poor technical condition that they require urgent replacement. Those systems will cost approximately

\$196 million to replace. Again, it is not a very rosy picture, as was painted last year. Some would even say it would have been very difficult for Mr Finn to even come to that conclusion last year. He was a minister who sat around the cabinet table with the member for Mackay and the member for Inala, who all made decisions on IT spend across the whole of government. Simon Finn used to say that he could only be the minister for IT for public works—that nobody else was responsible for it, that the Health payroll was everybody else's fault. Rob Swarten did not take any responsibility for the go-live. We all know about Paul Lucas. The poor man ended up the most unpopular minister ever in Queensland with nurses. He certainly was not popular.

Mr MULHERIN: So, Minister, you will take full responsibility into the future?

Ms BATES: The interim ICT audit has also discovered that 17 per cent of technologies within the Queensland government either are on extended support or are currently unsupported. An example of this is the Department of Community Safety payroll system, which moved out of vendor support in September 2008—four years ago—and is now supported by Queensland Shared Services on a best-efforts basis. In addition, some of the workforce supporting this archaic system who have specialised knowledge of it are actually reaching retirement age.

There are 12 particular systems that are causing some concern across government—the dirty dozen that has been left to us by the Bligh Labor government and its ministers. These systems are business-critical systems that need replacing urgently. These systems were ignored completely and absolutely by the former government.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, will you take full responsibility for ICT into the future?

Ms BATES: I am getting there. I think it is pretty obvious that the ICT audit is the first time that we have ever had a minister who actually will be responsible for the whole of government. I am going to take, unlike—

Mr MULHERIN: In the good times and bad times, Minister?

Ms BATES: Unlike your government, I am now charged, and our government is now charged, with fixing up the absolute, total debacle that your government—

Mr MULHERIN: So you have full responsibility from here on?

Ms BATES: You should be absolutely ashamed. You were a minister around that table—

Mr MULHERIN: You are not answering the question. Do you have full responsibility?

Ms BATES:—who ticked off on all of these debacles.

Mr MULHERIN: You are the minister. Have you got full responsibility?

Ms BATES: There are 12 critical systems we are looking at. At this stage the CIO is doing a whole-of-government audit. We are looking at the systems that you have left us with. We are looking at business solutions to try to deal with them. I do not know whether you realise, but \$3.5 billion to \$6 billion is an awfully big figure.

Mr MULHERIN: So, Minister, you will be responsible into the future?

Ms BATES: But I am not finished. I can continue.

Mr MULHERIN: You will not answer the question.

Ms BATES: There are, as I said, 12 critical systems. These systems were ignored by your government for years. It would be improper of me to pre-empt the ICT audit's finding by releasing the details of these systems today—

Mr MULHERIN: What I am asking is: are you responsible into the future?

Ms BATES:—but rest assured, member for Mackay—

Mr MULHERIN: The minister will not answer.

Ms BATES:—these systems are now receiving the careful planning that was lacking by the former government. I look forward to working with other ministers across government to help fix their problems, which apparently your government did not even know about.

One of the most flabbergasting statistics that I have been made aware of throughout the process relates to the very high level of duplication of investment across the Queensland government. For example, the taxpayers of Queensland are paying for 128 case management systems, 190 financial management systems and 109 document and record management systems. The estimated cost of operating all of these systems is \$80.1 million annually. Former minister Finn did not bring any of these problems to the committee's attention last year; he was too busy talking about how a \$46 million write-off on the IDES project was not a concern because it was all the government's money. Well, I have news for the government the member for Mackay was a member of: \$46 million of wasted taxpayers' money, written off by Treasury, was not government money; it belonged to the people of Queensland, and your former government still has not accepted any responsibility—

Mr MULHERIN: It is a user-pays system, so they abolished the loan so there would be greater take-up.

Ms BATES: I look forward to being further questioned by those opposite. Estimates has almost finished, and I have been asked one question in six months. There has not been one press statement by the member for Mackay as the IT spokesperson. There has not been one rebuttal in any newspaper, on any radio program or on any television program of the comments this government has made about what we have found from his former government. Bring on more questions, because—

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, just a simple yes or no.

Ms BATES: I am not finished. Bring on the questions, because I and this government—

Ms TRAD: Well, we are trying to bring them on, but you will not stop parroting on.

Ms BATES:—are not going to lie to the Queensland taxpayers about the legacy of debt—

Ms TRAD: Can't you just answer that? Yes or no?

Ms BATES:—that your government—

Mr LATTER: Point of order, Madam Chair. The question has been asked. The minister is answering it. Let her answer without interjections.

Ms TRAD: The minister is not answering the question. This is what estimates is about. If you purport to govern with transparency and honesty, answer the question.

CHAIR: Members, thank you for your comments.

Ms BATES: Thank you, member for South Brisbane. I know that you have been practising to be the Speaker by memorising the standing orders, but can I tell you that this government will be taking responsibility. Every minister in—

Ms TRAD: So are you the minister for whole-of-government IT?

Ms BATES: I am not finished. Every minister in this government is taking responsibility for their portfolio. If the member for South Brisbane were smart enough she might have actually gone to the Premier's website and looked at the charter letter, which says that I am responsible for ICT across the whole of government. I do not know—

Mr MULHERIN: So if there are any problems in the future—a simple yes or no—you are responsible? No other minister? Just Minister Bates? Is that correct?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I certainly am going to be responsible for fixing up the legacy of debt of 20 out of 22 years of Labor government.

Mr MULHERIN: Just a simple yes or no, Minister. Will you be responsible?

Ms BATES: I also note that I and my department and every other Queenslanders are going to have to be responsible for the debt that you and your government left us. One of those debts is a huge debt which will blow out to between \$3.5 billion and \$6 billion. Again I say to you: it has taken you six months to ask me one of the really important questions.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, why are you trying to dodge the question?

Ms BATES: I have just answered your question.

Mr MULHERIN: A simple question around whether you will be the responsible minister. Yes or no?

Ms BATES: I look forward to being further questioned by those who were responsible for leaving this horrible problem for others to fix and who were responsible for appointing one of the most oblivious ministers in Queensland history. I also note that I have been asked, as I said, my first ICT question in six months. What are you frightened of? What is the former government hiding?

Mr MULHERIN: We have nothing to be frightened of. We had bigger fish to fry. Your time will come.

Ms BATES: You have nothing to be frightened of? You have not asked one question on IT—

Ms TRAD: 6.3 per cent unemployment. I reckon that is a pretty big issue to confront.

Ms BATES: I also note that this is the first question I have been asked by the opposition—

Mr MULHERIN: Your performance today indicates that we would not get any answers to questions in question time anyway.

Ms BATES:—and it is the first public comment that the best resourced, laziest opposition in Australia has made on ICT since losing government. That is why they lost government. I think it is quite telling that you have not even rebutted a thing I have said about your horrible ICT legacy.

Mr MULHERIN: You will not even answer a question.

Ms BATES: Not one refute—not publicly, not in the media, not in parliament, nowhere.

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, you will not even answer a question.

Ms BATES: After all of this, you can question us on ICT with a straight face, with a record like that?

Mr MULHERIN: Yes or no, Minister: will you be responsible from this point onwards for ICT policy? If there is a mistake in the implementation or design—any error—are you the responsible minister or do we go to the—

Ms BATES: Is that a question or a statement?

Mr MULHERIN: I am asking you the question: yes or no?

Ms BATES: I am responsible for fixing up the mess that your government left us.

Mr MULHERIN: What about the new ICT frameworks that you will put in?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for that question. We cannot afford to buy anything new; we are actually going to have to go out and look at different sources—

Mr MULHERIN: Minister, will you be responsible for the introduction of those new systems that will come into play in—

Ms BATES: I actually thank the member for the question, because part of the ICT audit is actually looking at how your government purchased incredibly expensive IT components and systems. It was the Labor government that was very good at bespoke models—internal builds, where there was no business case and certainly no outcomes. Many of these have left us with a legacy of debt. They did not go through the proper processes. The ICT advisory group did not find out about it until it was at procurement stage.

Most of these did not go through the \$2 million review. So unlike the Labor government, we are not going to allow those sorts of processes to occur. We are going to have proper processes and proper procedures. I have already instituted a number of measures to make sure that the silo effect that your government presided over can never happen in this government. One of those initiatives is to set up a peer review committee of all the CIOs. The CIOs make sure that they bring to my CIO—the Queensland government CIO—and then to me any spend that is likely to occur in any other portfolio. This is to make sure that we do not have debacles that can be buck-passed like your former government did between firstly minister Schwarten and minister Lucas and then minister Finn who took on the ongoing debacle and refused to accept that his department had any part to play in what was obviously Australia's biggest IT debacle of \$1.25 billion. I am not sure where it rates overseas, but I am pretty sure it is high up there. Not one minister in the Bligh government took responsibility for the Health payroll and not one former minister in opposition has taken any responsibility.

Mr MULHERIN: But you will in the future.

Ms BATES: We certainly are going to make sure that what you presided over will never happen again. We have, as I said, the peer review process. There is no going around the Queensland government CIO to CBRC submissions at all. There is no going around the minister for IT for a submission to cabinet, either. In recent months, activities, which were previously carried out in three separate areas—

Mr MULHERIN: So all submissions will go through you, minister?

Ms BATES: I am answering the question. In recent months, activities previously carried out in three separate areas have been consolidated into an ICT strategic sourcing group within the government's ICT division of the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts.

A central policy group, which I have mentioned, and the Chief Procurement Office in the Department of Housing and Public Works is responsible for setting procurement policy and for managing numerous arrangements that enable departments to engage in procurement activities. I am certainly working with Minister Flegg on the way that ICT procurement has happened in the past and there will not be a silo mentality as well. The ICT strategic sourcing group will work within that policy setting to establish contemporary procurement practices within the ICT settings.

The Queensland Government Chief Information Office is currently conducting, as I said, the most comprehensive audit of ICT systems and management practices ever done in Queensland. I do not believe that has been done anywhere else, either, in Australia. The QGCIO is to report those outcomes. While those outcomes cannot be pre-empted, as I mentioned there is a high level of confidence that the government will be provided with a sound basis for determining the future ICT strategy for the public sector. Implementing that strategy will require focus on contemporary sourcing and procurement approaches and to provide rapid response to the needs of government and the community. My department will continue to position resources and expertise to support the significant changes that are needed to ensure that the Queensland government is supported by the best ICT services available with an affordable and manageable delivery model. I still find it so interesting that you raise ICT so late in the estimates. What are you trying to avoid?

Mr MULHERIN: I am not avoiding anything. Minister, I refer to the government's 2.0 policy for releasing information to the people of Queensland. It is about restoring accountability. I have a copy of an RTI request provided by your office. It is 28 pages long and almost entirely redacted. Are you the appropriate minister to assist in delivering this policy when your track record on releasing information is so poor? I table it for the information of the committee.

Mr PUCCI: I rise to a point of order. That asks for an opinion.

Mr MULHERIN: It is about policy.

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I believe that was to do with a CITEC issue, so I will pass that over to the director-general—

Mr MULHERIN: No, minister, the question is about the new government 2.0 and restoring accountability in government and being answerable to the people of Queensland.

Ms BATES: I know what you are talking about. The RTI in particular is to do with CITEC.

Mr MULHERIN: I ask the question: as the responsible minister—I would assume—is it appropriate that you should be the minister when you release documents like that?

Ms BATES: I thank you very much for the question. Before I was rudely interrupted, I was trying to say that that RTI, I believe, is about a CITEC issue that the director-general is happy to answer. However, as far as open and accountable government is concerned, to have a question like that from a former minister such as yourself, who sat around the cabinet table and made decisions that plunged the Queensland people into so much debt, I find absolutely amazing. I do not know where the member was earlier this week—

Mr MULHERIN: My next question is to the DG.

Ms BATES: —or early last week when the Premier announced our open data initiative. Unlike your government, we are going to put the data up there that is available for people. It is going to be great for IT initiatives. I have just recently come back from BIO where I met with the Microsoft research lab. They are making apps for fix my pothole—I am sure you can imagine the Premier would be very happy about that—identifying graffiti et cetera. This RTI that you have tabled is the one that is in relation to CITEC. So I am happy to get the relevant person to answer your question. There was nothing there, anyway. The scope was really poor. The request was poor, from my understanding. I will hand over to the DG.

Mr Reed: The CITEC RTI was assessed on the basis of the information not being relevant to the access application. I understand that the Office of the Information Commissioner is currently reviewing that matter. Therefore, we should await the outcome of that process.

Mr MULHERIN: Yes, I realise that.

Ms TRAD: Minister, given the commitments by the former shadow spokesperson for the arts, Mr Emerson, and the Premier before the election that there would be no cuts to arts funding and given the significant cuts detailed in your SDS and Budget Paper No. 4, do you not contend now that you misled the people of Queensland in relation to maintaining funding for the arts?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question and also the adept flick away from IT, because it gets a bit prickly over on your side of the table, I would imagine, when you have to ask questions like that. Certainly, with the—

Ms TRAD: That is why you kept flicking them.

Ms BATES: Certainly, with the arts, we have continued to fund all the majors. I have already outlined all the funding—

Ms TRAD: That is not what the SDS says.

Ms BATES: I am happy to get any of the major entities to clarify for you what is in the SDS, because the reductions in staffing—

Ms TRAD: No, you clarify it, minister.

Ms BATES: The reductions in staff—

Ms TRAD: It is your SDS.

Ms BATES: I am not finished. The reductions in staff are due to one-off programs like Prado, like the museum where—

Ms TRAD: So you are not expecting to have major exhibitions in the future?

Ms BATES: I am happy to get Suhanya to come up and talk to you, but we have about a year and a half's worth of planned exhibitions at this stage—

Ms TRAD: Fewer exhibitions, according to the SDS, fewer visits—

Ms BATES: I am happy for—

Ms TRAD: Less money. The LNP commitment—

Ms BATES: I am happy, as I mentioned, to talk about—

Ms TRAD: It was never, ever going to be honoured. That is what the fact is.

Ms BATES: If I can get the acting director of the Queensland gallery to come forward, thank you.

Ms TRAD: Surely, minister, you can answer this question. It is a simple question about your SDS and government policy and commitment to the arts.

Mr MULHERIN: Did you not sign off on it?

Ms BATES: I have referred the question to the relevant person. I am sure that—

Ms TRAD: You are the relevant minister.

Ms BATES: You can give her the courtesy of actually answering the question, thank you.

Mr MULHERIN: The minister does not know. That is why.

Ms TRAD: She does not know.

Ms Raffel: In terms of the 2012-13 budget that was approved as submitted to government, the support we receive for the gallery from the Queensland government covers our core operations and running costs. It allows the gallery to offer free public access to our collection, our public programs and the majority of exhibitions throughout the year. We are about to open an exhibition of Ian Fairweather's late works on 9 November. That profiles some key gifts that have come in in the last financial year. We are about to open the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art—a major exhibition, a landmark exhibition for the gallery. That is all within that core budget for the gallery.

Ms BATES: I would like to draw the member for Brisbane's attention—

Ms TRAD: South Brisbane.

Ms BATES: South Brisbane—to the 2011-12 budget as opposed to the 2012-13 budget. For the Library Board of Queensland, there is a 1.8 per cent increase. For the Queensland Art Gallery, there is a 10.9 per cent increase. For the Queensland Museum, there is an 8.6 per cent increase and for the Queensland Performing Arts Trust, there is an increase of 25.6 per cent. The Newman government, as I mentioned, has committed an extra \$6 million to the arts in Queensland over the next four years.

Ms TRAD: No, minister, you cut \$12.4 million.

Ms BATES: The existing funding agreements are being honoured.

Ms TRAD: And you have redirected \$6.2 million.

Ms BATES: Existing funding agreements are being honoured and current funding levels to the flagship art institutions, companies and festivals will be maintained through to 2015-16. The Arts portfolio is, of course, subject to the Newman government's program of fiscal repair like everybody else. I have already mentioned the savings over the next four years, which include \$7.56 million in limited life art+place grants, \$12.4 million in other grants, \$8.3 million in efficiency savings and in addition \$62.4 million in capital costs have been identified as savings but not proceeding with projects, which include the Cairns entertainment precinct, Musgrave Park and the fabulous water harvesting project, which did not work.

So funding has been maintained to the flagship art institutions at the cultural precincts, which is the State Library of Queensland, the Queensland Art Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art, the Queensland Museum and Sciencentre, the Queensland Performing Arts Centre; Queensland's major performing arts companies such as Opera Queensland, the Queensland Theatre Company, the Queensland Ballet and the Queensland Symphony Orchestra. The Queensland Theatre Company and the Queensland Ballet just recently had an increase of \$75,000 each since the budget. The four government owned arts companies—

Ms TRAD: Sorry, minister, you said on Spencer Howson that it was \$25,000. So are you saying now that it is \$75,000?

Ms BATES: Sorry, \$25,000. You are right. What I meant to say was that they were at \$75,000 and they have been put up \$25,000 to \$100,000 to meet the other major performing arts companies, to bring them into line. The four government owned arts companies are Screen Queensland, the Brisbane Festival, the Queensland Music Festival and the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, which is something that I am very proud of. The Newman government spent \$980,000 to move the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts out of South Brisbane and into Sheldon College, where they can now perform their dance manoeuvres without hitting their heads. It was a fabulous initiative and something that I will always be very proud of as the minister for the arts.

The Arts portfolio budget is \$237.1 million. To break that down, that is for the State Library of Queensland, \$54.7 million—

Ms TRAD: Thank you, minister. I am aware. I have read the SDS.

Ms BATES: The Queensland Museum—good on you. I am just making sure that you are aware.

Ms TRAD: Yes. But you cannot—

Ms BATES: But we are going to have much greater transparency and reduce red tape. We are making these savings by putting in the arts investment—

Ms TRAD: I know you are trying to fill in time because you do not want another question, but the—

Ms BATES: I am more than happy to take an IT question, if you would like to give me one.

Ms TRAD: The reality is, minister, is that your government—the LNP—committed to maintain funding for the arts in an election context and you have dishonoured that commitment. That is the basic fact of the matter.

Ms BATES: I thank the member for South Brisbane for the comment, but I am not sure what she would have preferred us to do in such fiscally constrained times.

Ms TRAD: Keep your promises to the Queensland people.

Ms BATES: With a debt left by your government—

Ms TRAD: Keep your promises to the Queensland people.

Ms BATES: I am assuming that you would have preferred that more people were offered redundancies instead of reducing the number of—

Ms TRAD: No, just keep your promises.

Ms BATES: Reducing the number of arts grants. As I have mentioned—and Suhanya has just reiterated—there is—

Ms TRAD: She did not say there were not cuts.

Ms BATES: There has been no reduction whatsoever.

Ms TRAD: She did not say there were not cuts.

Ms BATES: That is because there have not been. There has been no reduction to the funding of the major performing arts—

Ms TRAD: Minister, I heard very carefully what she had to say.

Ms BATES: It does not matter how many times the member for South Brisbane says it, it does not make it true.

CHAIR: Minister, the time has come to an end for the non-government questions. To go back to art, you have given some advice on this, but can you please provide advice on the success of the Prado exhibition?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I mentioned, I think I visited it about four times. Credit must go in particular to Tony Elwood, who has now gone down to the art gallery in Melbourne, for bringing the Prado exhibition to Queensland. I would also like to commend Suhanya for the fabulous job she has done taking over from Tony.

The Portrait of Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado was a major international exhibition exclusive to Brisbane. In fact, people may not realise that we beat out four or five bids from New South Wales. We beat out every other state to get the exhibition exclusively to Brisbane which has been on display from 21 July and finishes on 4 November. The Portrait of Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado is the largest and most significant loan the Prado has ever undertaken and it is the first time an exhibition from their collection has ever been shown in the southern hemisphere so it was fantastic it was here in Queensland.

Between July and September 2012 more than 48,000 people attended the exhibition and its contemporary participative programs. It has some fantastic programs, particularly some IT ones that enable kids to get really involved with a hands-on experience from the Prado. Events Queensland is the presenting sponsor and contributed \$2 million in support for this exhibition, along with federal support through the Australian Government International Exhibition Insurance Program. This major international exhibition was specially curated for the gallery by the Museo Nacional del Prado in Madrid. The Prado is one of the leading museums of the world and is recognised for its unparalleled collection of European paintings and sculptures. Over 100 masterpieces from the Prado's revered collection of European paintings are on display in the exhibition depicting the history of painting in Spain over a period of three and a half centuries. The exhibition includes works by master artists such as El Greco and Peter Paul Rubens. To complement the exhibition, the gallery has developed La Sala del Prado, a large-scale lounge environment, which is terrific, where visitors to the exhibition can enjoy the exhibition cafe and, as I mentioned, participate in multimedia interactives and drawing activities provided for children. You can actually take your children along.

In conjunction with the exhibition, the gallery presented Pedro Almodovar from 21 July to 2 September 2012, which is a retrospective of films by one of Spain's most acclaimed directors. The gallery is also presenting 100 years of Spanish cinema from 25 July to 4 November, a major historical survey of Spanish cinemas.

The gallery's popular Up Late program has returned for Portrait of Spain and provides visitors with the opportunity to enjoy the exhibition on Friday nights. The Up Late program also includes weekly talks, live music performances and Spanish cuisine. The gallery produced two publications in association with the exhibition, an exhibition catalogue entitled *Portrait of Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado* and a children's publication titled *Portrait of Spain For Kids* which I believe came from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation.

CHAIR: I will now call the member for Burnett.

Mr BENNETT: Minister, are you comfortable taking a question on ICT?

Ms BATES: Thank you.

Mr BENNETT: How are you going to ensure that investment in ICT is done more effectively and efficiently in the future?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. There is a dedicated IT portfolio which never occurred under the former Labor government. For the first time with this ICT audit we are going to get a snapshot of how much waste the former Labor government has left us with and the debacles that we have been left with. They are quite frightening, member for Burnett. I am sure that the Queensland public will not be laughing like the member for South Brisbane was. The former member—and I stress the former member for Yeerongpilly—also laughed off \$46 million worth of taxpayers funds and said it did not matter because it was all government money.

We on the other hand have a much more disciplined view on how we manage \$1.6 billion. It is about estimated spend. I think I said \$1.2 million before. If it is \$1.6 million that is probably around about the right amount. I think, as I said, it is about a million dollars a minute. The key to making sure our decisions are more effective and efficient in the future is by receiving good advice. Historically government has made point decisions about investment in ICT. It is more important to make informed decisions on priorities across all areas of government. This government, unlike the previous government, will empower the Queensland Government Chief Information Officer to oversee all ICT expenditure and ensure effective investment decisions and governance is made. When the QGCIO was appointed in the Bligh government he was effectively appointed with one arm tied behind his back. The Newman government has made sure that his arms are untied and he, for the first time, is able to see across whole-of-government what the spend has been and what the waste has been. The ICT audit I think will have Queenslanders gasping at the incredible waste of money and the atrocious neglect of the former government.

As I mentioned, it is very important that we make informed decisions on priorities and the QGCIO will be working closely with my department to ensure that that occurs. The Queensland Government Chief Information Office currently manages this through an investment review process known as the peer review. I am sure that if we had a peer review the IDES email debacle would have been cancelled much earlier on. In August we decided to expand the scope to include all ICT expenditure. We instructed the Queensland Government Chief Information Office to review the panel's terms of reference and membership. We have developed a process that includes the Queensland Government Chief Information Office conducting a preliminary assessment of all ICT procurement and a detailed assessment of significant initiatives.

The Queensland Government Chief Information Office will monitor the revised processes to assess the resourcing implications of these changes. The new scope allows the Queensland Government Chief Information Office to determine if the proposed investment impacts on potential strategic options to be recommended by the ICT audit. The extension of the peer review mandate will ensure cost effective and strategic alignment of all ICT procurement during the audit period. It will also assess the audit team by maintaining ongoing visibility of ICT initiatives. This activity ensures robust applications of portfolio program and project management methodologies. It includes the detailed analysis of the government's ICT portfolio to ensure that only the right programs and projects are funded and the project assurance and Gateway reviews will now help ensure that projects remain on track to deliver the anticipated benefits and remain cost effective.

The Gateway review was one of the policies that we wrote in opposition in the lead-up to the election. It is a pre-eminent method of reviewing project assurance, particularly in the United Kingdom. My understanding is that had the former government initiated a Gateway review then the Queensland Health payroll debacle would not have got through gates 2, 3 and 4. The QGCIO will be taking an active role in assurance of the highest priority initiatives across government. I really look forward to the IT audit coming down. We have an extraordinary job in front of us to try to firstly work out what the former government did and secondly to work out how we are going to fix it. There are systems that are completely out of date where the codes are locked away in a vault and you would need someone about 20 years older than me to be able to write the code if anything goes wrong with some of those programs.

My department itself, in the machinery of government change, inherited some eight different payroll systems. There are 3,900-odd staff members in DSITIA who are Monday to Friday, nine to five, white collar workers, yet we have eight payroll systems. I do not know any business that would be ridiculous enough to have something like that. That is just in my department. I have six financial

systems. Pick which one you want to use this week, because the former government had invested in items without looking across whole-of-government to see if there was a great initiative working in Education that could have been extrapolated out across whole-of-government. There were independent silos that enabled ridiculous submissions to CBRC and straight up to cabinet, and there were cabinet members who sat there while we went through email debacles such as the IDES program. It is this government that has stopped that program. My understanding was that it was originally a \$210 million program over 10 years for an email identification system. Anybody in IT knows that in 10 years time it would have been obsolete before it even started. There was a loan from the Queensland Treasury that was written off and laughed off by former minister Simon Finn. Premier Newman condemned his flippant dismissal of the decision to write off the loan. He said—

The Minister seems to pass it off as 'Oh, it's only government money'.

Minister, by wasting this money, you're wasting the people's money...and that's why people are paying higher water and power prices and rego bills.

This is the legacy that we have been left with. I take my role very seriously. We are taking responsibility in my portfolio for IT. I will continue to highlight for every Queenslanders every time I discover another system that has been left to go to rack and ruin by the former government. You can rest assured that I will not be standing by quietly like the two members of the opposition here right now who have taken six months and nearly two hours into the estimates committee to ask one question on ICT. I ask leave to table the document I was reading from, which is an article from the *Courier-Mail*, 'State email system a \$46m white elephant' dated 6 December whilst we were still in opposition. I raised that issue in opposition.

CHAIR: The minister has sought leave. Is leave granted? Leave is granted. I call on the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I would like to actually ask a question in regard to the Shared Services Division. Can the minister outline how her department is assisting central agencies in processing the government's fiscal repair agenda?

Ms BATES: I thank the honourable member for the question. Shared services is the Holy Grail of ICT. It is what every government has attempted to do and most have failed. Western Australia, for instance, when it took government from a Labor government, axed their shared services. New South Wales and Victoria are currently reviewing shared services and certainly this government is looking at efficiencies and business models that will more effectively provide services to whole-of-government. The problem again with the former government with its silo mentality was that there was no mandate for departments to use shared services. It was up to them if they wanted to. Most departments decided that they could probably go it alone and that they could do it cheaper. That is not always the case. We are certainly looking at reviewing shared services. We have been working hard to save as much money as we possibly can. Certainly we are looking at saving as many jobs as possible in shared services. We want to give Queensland public servants greater certainty. In that respect the government has decided to bring on the FTE losses in 2012-13 which I think has already been reported in the media. The 2012-13 budget confirmed that the total number of FTEs to be lost in 2012-13 will be 14,000. The total number of people receiving a redundancy from the Public Service under our fiscal repair program is 10,600, while the remaining losses will be achieved by not filling currently vacant positions and the removal of temporary and contract staff whose contracts are coming to an end. DSITIA has published staffing level adjustments required in 2012-13 as a result of this fiscal repair task, which are about 110 positions.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That is the end of the time allocated for the consideration of the estimates for the proposed expenditure.

Ms BATES: Madam Chair, advice was requested. I seek leave to table the lobbyists register, which we have been able to obtain.

CHAIR: Is leave granted to the minister to table this? Thank you, Minister. The time allocated has now expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, the Director-General, the chief executive officers and departmental officials for your attendance and your work towards informing our examination of the proposed appropriation. This completes the committee's hearings into the matters referred to it by the parliament.

Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee I thank the Hansard staff and attendants for their assistance. I particularly wish to thank our research staff, Bernice, Emily and Carolyn, who have put in an enormous effort towards all of the committee work, and particularly today as it has been a very long day. I declare the 2012 estimates hearing of the Education and Innovation Committee closed.

Ms BATES: Madam Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your committee members for the way in which you have conducted this estimates hearing. I look forward to next year's hearing.

The Committee adjourned at 8.00 pm