

THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2016

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE— JUSTICE, ATTORNEY-GENERAL, TRAINING AND SKILLS

Estimate Committee Members

Mr ML Furner (Chair)
Mr MJ Crandon
Mr DJ Brown
Mr JM Krause
Mr JE Pease
Mrs JA Stuckey

Members in Attendance

Mr JP Bleijie
Mrs JR Miller
Mr IB Walker
Mr TL Mander
Mr R Katter

In Attendance

Hon. YM D'Ath, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills
Mr J Sullivan, Chief of Staff

Department of Employment and Training

Dr J Watterston, Director-General

Ms S Wauchope, Deputy Director-General, Training and Skills

TAFE Queensland

Ms J Schmidt, Chief Executive Officer

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Mr D Mackie, Director-General

Mr G Davis, Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services Branch, Corporate Services

Mr D Ford, Deputy Director-General, Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading

Electoral Commission of Queensland

Mr W van der Merwe, Electoral Commissioner

Crime and Corruption Commission

Mr A MacSporran QC, Chairman

Committee met at 9.01 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning everyone. I declare the estimates hearing on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee now open. We will be examining the Appropriation Bill 2016 in respect of the portfolio areas administered by the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for

Training and Skills, and then later in the day the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Correctional Services. I am Mark Furner, member for Ferny Grove, chair of the committee; also with me is Mr Michael Crandon, the deputy chair, Mr Don Brown, Mr Jon Krause, Ms Joan Pease and Mrs Jann Stuckey. The committee has granted leave to the following members of the parliament to attend and ask questions throughout the day: Mr Tim Nicholls, Mrs Deb Frecklington, Mr Jeff Seeney, Mr Ian Walker, Mr Jarrod Bleijie, Mr Tim Mander, Mrs Jo-Ann Miller and Mr Robbie Katter. The hearing program for today has been published and is available from the secretariat staff. It details the order in which we will examine expenditure for the various organisational skills and units within these portfolios. The proceedings will end today at 7.30 pm.

I remind all those participating in the hearing today that these proceedings are similar to parliament in that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard I remind all press that under the standing orders any person may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearings to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the conditions of broadcasting of proceedings are available from the secretariat staff. I ask that all mobile phones or pagers be turned off or switched to silent mode. I remind members that, in addition to the minister, the standing orders provide that the Director-General and chief executive officers as set out in schedule 7 of the standing orders may be directly questioned by the committee.

I now declare the proposed expenditure of the relevant organisational units within the portfolios of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Attorney-General, Director-General and departmental statutory authority officers and public to this hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask that department and statutory authority officers to identify themselves when they first speak and that all speakers speak directly into the microphone. We will commence the proceedings focusing on the proposed expenditure in the training and skills portfolio until we break at 10.30 am. For the benefit of the minister and other persons and members, we have declared 15-minute blocks of questioning for non-government and government members. Attorney, I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mrs D'ATH: Thank you very much Mr Chairman and committee members. I am very pleased to attend the 2016-17 budget estimates hearing for the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. First, I acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to the elders both past and present. I am very pleased to be sitting here in front of you today to answer questions regarding the Training and Skills aspects of my overall portfolio responsibilities. There are many aspects to this portfolio, so it is important that we set the overall scene and where my role sits in the whole-of-government approach of the Palaszczuk government.

The government is investing in training and skills to help build the workforce we need to attract and build new industries, to expand existing industries and to create jobs. This government is committed to giving Queenslanders the training and skills they need to get into the workforce, to build a career and to provide for their families. Through many programs and policy initiatives, we are working to provide jobs and job opportunities for Queenslanders. These great initiatives come from right across the ministry and form part of the overall Working Queensland package, whether it is the work of the Treasurer in payroll tax rebates, the Deputy Premier and her work with infrastructure and international education, Minister Grace and her back-to-work package, Minister O'Rourke and the National Disability Insurance Scheme rollout, Minister Hinchcliffe and the Commonwealth Games, Minister Jones and tourism, Minister Bailey and Main Roads projects, Minister Lynham and his work with State Development or, importantly, Minister Enoch and her work with Advance Queensland policy. Of course this all means that, while all of these ministers and indeed every member of the government is working tirelessly to create the jobs which will give Queenslanders every opportunity to build their careers, the role of the training and skills portfolio is to provide the opportunity for Queenslanders to access quality training. It is not just to support any training but well-aligned, well thought-out training in fields where there is demand now or likely to be in coming years. That is why this year the government is investing \$60 million to deliver our commitment to Skilling Queenslanders for Work, to support up to 8,000 Queenslanders get the skills they need to get back into the workforce or enter higher level training or alternatively for young people to re-engage in education. This is part of the government's commitment of \$240 million over four years to deliver up to 32,000 placements.

I am very pleased to note that earlier this week the Premier announced the release of the successful applicants for round one of 2016-17. I also note the interest from both sides of the House about the great life-changing benefits this program can bring. That is why this government recognises that a strong public training provider is crucial to deliver the skills workforce Queensland needs for economic growth and to support expanding industries. As a result, this budget will continue to implement the government's Rescuing TAFE Initiative, part of the \$34 million investment over three years to support the TAFE sector and provide high-quality training for Queenslanders. We are also delivering on our plan for future growth of TAFE to ensure that it has the best facilities to deliver that training. Recently we released this year's VET investment plan which sees an increase of \$56.1 million in the training budget. We also recently released the draft quality framework. We also established the office of the Queensland Training Ombudsman where Queenslanders can go when there is an issue with their training, ensuring that when you undertake training in this state you can be sure this government is committed to the quality of that training. It is vital that the public have faith in all of the training on offer to them and resolutions available to them when there is a problem.

Finally, that is why we established Jobs Queensland, an independent body already working in its home in Ipswich, which has a very clear and explicit mandate. That mandate is about driving long-term job opportunities and strategic planning for skills demand, engaging with industry, identifying the jobs now and into the future, the skills needs, and making sure we as a government channel our funding to ensure that we address those needs. This work will be crucial in providing the Queensland economy with the highly skilled workforce we need to support growth and investment, attract new industries and secure jobs into the future. The interim reference group is meeting regularly and has undertaken a wide range of activities across a large number of industry groups. I pay tribute to the newly appointed chair of Jobs Queensland, Rachel Hunter, for driving this work and for establishing a strong presence while the permanent board is established.

This is a very brief overview of a portfolio area that has many great stories to tell. I look forward to sharing these with the committee in the session ahead.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. We will go to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, apprenticeships are down, traineeships are down, school-based apprenticeships and traineeships are down, unemployment is up. Is it sheer incompetence, or are you just asleep at the wheel in terms of your portfolio?

CHAIR: That question is out of order. I will not allow any questions that offend the standing orders, so the member for Kawana might want to rephrase that question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Absolutely Mr Chair, thank you. Jobs Queensland was established as part of the government's Jobs Now, Jobs Tomorrow package. It passed the parliament in September last year. Despite what you just said about Jobs Queensland being established, has the permanent board been appointed yet?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. In relation to Jobs Queensland, the Jobs Queensland Act came into effect on 4 January this year. Since that time we immediately established a Jobs Queensland interim reference group which had its first meeting on 28 January this year. That group has met monthly, has had six meetings to date and has been engaged in a very wide range of activities in relation to workforce planning and skills and also industry engagement that I am happy to take the member through in detail. On the specific question about the current board and putting in place a permanent board, I advise that the expressions of interest closed on 18 July. There has been enormous interest in this Jobs Queensland board. There were 259 applications received for positions on Jobs Queensland. We will work through those applications to ensure that we have the best people and a mix of skills and expertise on Jobs Queensland to go forward, but I can assure the member that the interim reference group has been very active and busy and will continue to be and deliver for government while we establish the permanent board.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to this package and, as I said, it was a centre point of your government's proposal for jobs, you have advised that the interim board has been established but that no permanent board has been established yet. If it was such a priority of the Palaszczuk government, why has it taken 18 months to get one board established in Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I am sure that the opposition would not want to see us advertising and appointing people to a board before the legislation was in place to provide for that board. As I said, the legislation came into effect on 4 January this year.

Mr BLEIJIE: Seven months ago.

Mrs D'ATH: It was 4 January this year. Within four weeks there was an interim reference group on the ground already doing the work. In relation to the member's question, I am happy to go through what this board has done as an interim reference group. Since the board was created, it has met with a large number of industry bodies and stakeholders. It has had more than 19 industry engagements.

Since early February, it has met with the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network and attended its work shop again in February in terms of jobs and employment patterns in south-east Queensland. It also met with Grant Thornton, the Australian Industry Group, Construction Skills Queensland—gave a presentation—Queensland Fitness Sport and Recreation Alliance, the Queensland Trucking Association, Health and Community Workforce Council, Motor Trades Association Queensland, Auto Skills Australia, Master Electricians Australia, Australian Sugar Mill Council, Grant Thornton, Energy Skills Queensland, Asset Training Australia, the Queensland Council of Unions, the Queensland Resources Council, QMI Solutions, Construction Skills Queensland—again—Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland Workforce, and held a skills and productivity committee meeting.

It also attended industry events such as the Queensland Tourism Industry Council boardroom lunch, the skills shortage in Queensland trends and prospects forum held by Griffith University and the Farsight Project launch by Construction Skills Queensland. Those are stakeholders that it has been meeting with.

I can also go through for the member the sort of industry engagement conducted and the initiatives. They have already started work in priority areas such as the Advancing Tourism plan and emerging and innovative industries funding in relation to rescuing TAFE. They have had input in relation to the VET investment plan. They have already started work in relation to the skills needs in the NDIS, the local first initiatives, of course engaging on the Commonwealth Games and engaging on the Queen's Wharf development and priority industry road map steering committee. They have been involved in the Advanced Manufacturing road map, the Queensland aerospace industry's 10-year road map discussion paper and the employment policy key partners meeting.

They have engaged with the Training Ombudsman, Sunchip's proposed industry skills training centre in Maryborough, the industry agency reference group for the implementation of the Advancing Small Business Queensland strategy, Jobs Queensland and Advance Queensland Treasury workshops and the Queensland employment and training interagency group meeting. They have also engaged with departments and relevant agencies on Back to Work. I think it is fair to say that in the just over seven months this interim reference group has been established, since the legislation came into effect, it has been extremely busy.

Mr BLEIJIE: I put it to you, then, that for the six months that this interim board has been established—since January—it sounds like there have been lots of discussions. It sounds like there has been more of a talkfest than any action. How many jobs have been created through Jobs Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I suspect the answer is probably the same as the ministerial industry council that the previous government established. It is a body—

Mr BLEIJIE: The difference is that we established it. It was actually working. It was there.

Mrs D'ATH: It delivered one report—

Mr BLEIJIE: It was there; it was established.

Mrs D'ATH: One report in two to three years in relation to the ministerial industry council.

Mr BLEIJIE: How many reports has Jobs Queensland produced?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, allow the Attorney to answer the question, thanks.

Mrs D'ATH: This body is established to work with and develop workforce planning with industry stakeholders to identify where are the jobs now and the job opportunities in the future across regions, across industries, across occupations; help identify the skills needs; look at important areas such as the NDIS and growth in tourism opportunities and initiatives such as Advance Queensland; what are the skills needs we are going to need, such as the STEM subjects, for those who are going through the VET pathways; making sure we are looking at issues like apprenticeship and traineeship numbers and the decline in this area; and what we can do to engage with industry to improve the take-up of apprenticeships and traineeships. Its job is to support job initiatives, make sure we have the skilled workforce and make sure that our training dollars are being directed to where those skill needs are. That is its purpose.

Mr BLEIJIE: With that purpose, you have budgeted \$40 million for this organisation. It has only spent \$850,000 on an interim establishment. We have ascertained today that there is no permanent board established. The interim board was established. The legislation was passed last year and started in January this year. With all these discussions ongoing and coming up with all these great plans—and they have talked to all these different industry groups in Queensland—surely when you established this body you ascertained a way to calculate jobs created because of all these discussions, or are they just having meetings and no jobs are being created? That is what I am getting from your answer: no jobs are being created through this body.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. What the member is getting from this is not understanding the purpose of Jobs Queensland. Jobs Queensland is about supporting industry and ensuring we are training up the workforce so we do not end up as one of those governments that sits here saying, 'Why do we have a skills shortage? What are we going to do about the skills shortage in this state? Let's bring in foreign workers from overseas to fill those skills gaps.' You need to forward-plan.

Jobs Queensland is about bringing together all of those other job initiatives that I have talked about across various ministers and determining where we are going to create jobs into the future where there are new start-ups, where there are new innovations, where there is greater demand such as the tourism sector and where we know we have to double the workforce for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is about actually doing the planning hand in hand with industry and experts to make sure that we have the skilled workforce. It is helping business. It is attracting business to Queensland by saying, 'We will have the skilled workforce for you.' It is, importantly, making sure that people who find themselves unemployed can get the skills they need as quickly as possible to get back into employment or that those who are leaving school or leaving university and are still needing to go into employment have the training opportunities to do that. We are providing training where the job opportunities are. That road mapping, that matching-up with work, is what this does.

Jobs Queensland is about supporting jobs. We will see into the future the importance of that industry engagement that was not happening in a collaborative way across various sectors—looking at all of the initiatives that are happening in job creation. That is Jobs Queensland's role.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I seek leave to table a document.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the benefit of the committee I table 10 copies of this document so the members of the committee and the Attorney-General can have a copy. I have tabled the advertisement—

CHAIR: It might be helpful if the minister has a copy of the document in front of her.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, what I have tabled for the committee is a copy of the Department of Education and Training advertisement that appeared in the newspaper on 2 July. You have admitted to this committee that Jobs Queensland was official and started in January 2016. Some six months later we have an advertisement in the newspaper on the day of the federal election for board members—six months later. If this was such an urgent priority and there have been all these discussions happening, how hard has it been for the government to actually put a quarter-page ad in the newspaper advertising board positions? Why did it take six months?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. The statement and the insinuation that, once again, nothing has been happening for six months is just blatantly wrong and is quite misleading.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is the board.

Mrs D'ATH: It is misleading to say that Jobs Queensland—it is an advertisement for the permanent appointments of the board.

Mr BLEIJIE: Permanent appointments for the board.

Mrs D'ATH: It is misleading for the member to claim that Jobs Queensland has been doing nothing since the act came into operation at the start of January. It is just misleading.

Mr BLEIJIE: When was the office established in Ipswich?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to get that date for you—the date it was established. I know the member has made previous statements that it is a temporary office. It is a permanent office. We have established—

Mr BLEIJIE: When was it established?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, allow the minister to answer the question.

Mrs D'ATH: I have already advised the member that I will get that date for him. I will take that on notice and I will get that date to the member. It has been important that we did not delay the work of Jobs Queensland by ensuring we had a reference group—

Mr BLEIJIE: Six months later. Come on!

Mrs D'ATH: The member does not want to listen to the facts, as always. It is all about trying to point-score.

Mr BLEIJIE: I do—

CHAIR: Stop interjecting, member.

Mrs D'ATH: We are used to this, Chair.

Mr BLEIJIE: You cannot say it with a straight face. Come on!

Mrs D'ATH: I am laughing at the member who, despite the number of times I have gone through and the length of time I have spent this morning going through all of the work that Jobs Queensland has done since January, still thinks nothing has been happening for six months.

Mr BLEIJIE: No jobs.

Mrs D'ATH: It is extraordinary. I can advise that it was important to get a reference group in place as soon as possible and to put them to work, to get them doing the groundwork to establish those engagements with stakeholders while we got a board in place. I appreciate that the member may have done this a different way if he were in government and may have rushed to make appointments very quickly. I want to make sure we do this properly. I want to make sure that we are going through a proper expression-of-interest process. As much as the opposition member might mock the establishment of Jobs Queensland, the fact that we had 259 applications to be board members of Jobs Queensland says there is a lot of interest out there in being involved in a body like this that is doing important work to identify skills needs and engage with industry across Queensland.

Again, in responding to the member's question, it is misleading to claim that nothing has been done for the six months. This is about now putting in place the permanent board, but we had a reference group operating within four weeks of the act coming into operation.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is there a CEO, Minister?

Mrs D'ATH: There is an executive director, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: When were they appointed?

Mrs D'ATH: In answering the member's question on when Jobs Queensland commenced in Ipswich, I can advise that it was 29 February. In relation to the appointment of the new executive director, I will again take that on notice and get the date for you. The office commenced on 29 February. I am advised that the appointment was made in May and the new executive director started in June.

Mr BLEIJIE: When was the chair, Rachel Hunter, appointed?

Mrs D'ATH: Rachel Hunter was appointed in the last couple of weeks as the permanent chair but has been acting as the interim chair since the start.

CHAIR: We will now go to government members for questions.

Mr BROWN: With regard to page 44 of Budget Paper No. 4 and the Back to Work initiative, as announced in the recent budget, could the Attorney please elaborate on the role TAFE Queensland will play and why they are well placed to do so?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. Certainly I appreciate—and I know the member appreciates—the role that TAFE plays in Queensland, not just as a premium public training provider in this state but, importantly, getting it back to being the premium training provider in this state. We know that they perform an extremely important role. I am very pleased that they are playing a role as part of the Back to Work program.

I can advise that the Back to Work program, which is a two-year, \$100 million package announced by the government, a regional employment package, is to provide regional businesses with financial support to employ jobseekers and boost regions facing challenging economic times. It includes three areas, which is the \$80 million for Back to Work employment support. As the member would be aware, it is up to \$15,000 paid to employers who take on regional jobseekers, including those disadvantaged in the labour market such as the long-term unemployed, young people, mature age jobseekers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. An amount of \$10 million will go towards the certificate III guarantee boost to provide additional training for eligible jobseekers to ensure they have

the skills they need for work and \$10 million for Back to Work teams who know the local economy and local employers and can connect employers and jobseekers to opportunities and support. The role of TAFE will be to provide navigators and to help those who are needing to undertake training to identify their training needs, to identify the training available in those areas and to link them in with employers who are wanting to engage people under the Back to Work program.

Mr BROWN: Can the minister also please discuss some of the unique courses that TAFE Queensland offers to students across the state and why the offerings such as these are so important on a local, national and international level in terms of TAFE Queensland's role as a public provider, as discussed on page 43 of the SDS?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. We know that TAFE does provide opportunities that others do not. The reason—and this is why it is so important to have a public provider in Queensland—is that often there are courses that are not profitable. They are the courses that are offered to people—it is about those underpinning courses; it is about those foundation skills. In the case of those who want to go on and do certificate III and higher qualifications, often they need those foundation skills to get them there. They are not courses that, quite honestly, private providers necessarily want to deliver on. The people who are undertaking those courses are the people who can least afford it and need the support to undertake those programs. I know that in opposition I talked a lot about the foundation skills for people with disabilities that TAFE runs.

It is about the type of courses, such as foundation skill courses, but it is also about where they deliver. The reason it is so important that TAFE is a public provider is that it delivers in areas where there might be very limited other RTOs to deliver these courses. It is the type of courses it delivers and the areas and the regions in which it delivers them that is important.

Going to some of the unique courses that TAFE runs which others do not, TAFE Queensland provides the motorcycle technology program. This is the only provider in the state that trains people to maintain motorcycles. I was quite surprised myself because I thought this is something that many providers would deliver, but it is the only one of its type in Queensland. It is based in Hervey Bay, and people come from all over the state to undertake this training on motorcycles. Some of the really big distributors of motorcycles loan or donate their motorcycles to TAFE so that the students can learn on that particular type of motorcycle. We have had significant donations and the latest bikes are from Honda, Yamaha, Suzuki and Kawasaki, who have all supported this TAFE Queensland program.

I recently visited a bicycle course at SkillsTech, Bracken Ridge. We tend not to turn our minds much to the maintaining of bicycles, but let's face it, there are a lot of people in Queensland who like to cycle and that is a good thing. We want more people doing that, young and old, because it is a great way to stay healthy. At Bracken Ridge they are delivering niche training around the state to a growing bicycle industry. They boast of 50 apprentices and fee-for-service clients in 2015-16, training across a range of bicycle related courses to meet the specific needs of small business and a growing number of fee-for-service clients. Small bicycle shops do not have the time to train people in these skills, so that is certainly an important one.

TAFE Queensland SkillTech also has mobile training vans. They have fully fitted-out mobile vans and they are going to workplaces and delivering training, which is unique. This is a delivery method that more and more employers are wanting. For convenience they want the trainer to come to them. They do not necessarily have all the equipment to do that, so these mobile training vans are a great initiative by TAFE Queensland.

Mr BROWN: I especially appreciate that, being a MAMIL myself. With regard to page 43 of the SDS, could the minister please provide information about local links that TAFE Queensland Gold Coast has been able to establish which will provide training and employment opportunities for locals in the lead-up to the 2018 Commonwealth Games.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. On 29 February this year TAFE Queensland signed a tier 1 partnership agreement with Goldoc as an official partner for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. TAFE Queensland has exclusive category designation and is the training partner for the Gold Coast 2018 volunteers. TAFE Queensland will provide 15,000 volunteers with transferrable skills and future opportunities to gain accreditation and employability, which will provide benefits to both Gold Coast employers and the community more broadly. TAFE Queensland has the reach and capacity to provide high-quality training outcomes for the 15,000 volunteers required to make the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games a success and to meet the shared goals of innovation, sustainability and accessibility.

Preparation for the volunteer training is underway, with the first train the trainer program scheduled for late 2016. TAFE Queensland will use this training to demonstrate that it is a contemporary vocational educator which has the capacity to deliver innovative, bespoke and diversified training to a large number of students and to work with a significant partner such as Goldoc. TAFE Queensland will continue to build on its strong partnership with Goldoc for extensive collaboration to implement an innovative and sustainable program. TAFE Queensland will empower those volunteers to contribute to what will be a landmark event for Queensland while providing skills and training to the Gold Coast community.

As you would appreciate, big international events like this do not happen without a lot of volunteers. The reputation of Queensland and Australia and the experience that people take away from the Commonwealth Games will come down to the volunteers, not just the sporting events they watch. When we launched this we had a couple of athletes from previous games who talked about the support they received from volunteers. When they did not win that medal or they had a problem, that volunteer was there and supported them the whole way. We always think of volunteers as smiling meeters and greeters who engage with the public, but it is so much more than that. As I say, how well the Commonwealth Games go and the report we get back from the Commonwealth Games will very much come down to people's personal experiences and their engagement with those volunteers. That is why I am so proud that TAFE Queensland is the partner to deliver that training.

Mr BROWN: Staying on page 43 of the SDS, why is TAFE well placed to provide services to a wide range of government programs, including Skilling Queenslanders for Work and Back to Work?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. This again touches on what I was saying earlier. TAFE Queensland is best placed because of the quality of the people, No. 1. What I hear from employers all the time is that they can rely on the training that they get from TAFE. Employers go to TAFE and ask, 'Do you have any apprentices or trainees or graduating students in this area?' because they know that they will get quality, trained students from TAFE Queensland. Because we have a presence right across the state we can deliver training in the regions as well. I think a lot of people still do not realise that TAFE has now moved into the undergraduate space. It has partnered with the University of Canberra and is delivering undergraduate degrees as well, so with TAFE you can go from foundation skills and a certificate I all the way through to higher education and a university degree. TAFE is really delivering it all for people across Queensland. We know that, by reinvesting in TAFE through the Rescuing TAFE initiative, we will give them the funding and the resources they need to be not only sustainable for the future but to grow into the future.

Mr BROWN: In relation to page 4 of the SDS, can the Attorney please explain the importance of a strong, resilient TAFE Queensland to the overall VET sector in Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. Going back to the importance of a public provider, what we have seen is that the training sector is a demand-driven contestable market and we sometimes see training providers shut their doors. Whether they are forced to shut their doors because they have not complied with the required quality framework and standards set by ASQA or whether they financially close their doors, we see private training providers close their doors across the state. When they do, it is really important that we have someone who can step in and pick up those students. TAFE can do that and often fills the gap. It is able to step up very quickly and say, 'We will pick those students up. We will help them finish those qualifications where the previous RTO failed.' This is in addition to all of the things I have already mentioned: the types of courses they deliver, their reach across the regions and being able to step in quickly to support those students who end up losing their training provider—often suddenly—to continue with their training and qualifications.

I have Jodi Schmidt here, the CEO of TAFE Queensland, so I am happy for members to ask any questions directly of TAFE as well because I think it is important to hear from TAFE on these matters.

Mr BROWN: That is exactly what happened when Keystone Capalaba closed and the Alexandra Hills TAFE picked it up. I thank the Attorney for the answer.

CHAIR: Minister, I have a question but I am mindful of the time because I want to ensure that we have equal amounts of time. Going to page 11 of the SDS with respect to the importance of the Training Ombudsman, I would like you to inform the committee of the role it plays in ensuring that the interests of Queensland in the training sector are protected.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. Certainly I believe that one of the really important initiatives this government has brought in is to reintroduce the Queensland Training Ombudsman and with broader powers than the previous training ombudsman. This is so important because there was basically no oversight between the department and ASQA at a federal level. For

example, if a student had concerns about the quality of their training or whether they were getting training at all, or if there were concerns about the marketing techniques of some training providers, or if training providers themselves were concerned about the practices of other training providers or if employers were concerned about the quality of training being delivered to their apprentices or trainees, the only place they could turn was ASQA. Quite honestly, that is not a very quick process and there are not necessarily any steps that can be taken beyond issuing a warning or a show cause notice and all of that. I can see the chair is probably trying to wind me up. I am happy to go into further detail later on with statistics about the Training Ombudsman, but we have seen complaints increasing, we are identifying systemic issues and it certainly seems to show that there was good reason why a Training Ombudsman needed to be created.

CHAIR: I will now return to the member for Kawana.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, with respect to Jobs Queensland—just keeping on that theme—you mentioned how great Jobs Queensland policy is going to be and the great work that the interim panel has done, despite the fact you have admitted that the permanent panel has not been established yet. If they are that important to Queensland and the Palaszczuk government's job investment strategy, why are they not here today?

Mrs D'ATH: Rachel Hunter is here today although she is not required to be. Rachel Hunter is the chair of Jobs Queensland, and I am more than happy to have Rachel answer any questions.

Mr BLEIJIE: I suspect they are not on the witness list because they have not been established. They are not officially on the witness list.

Mrs D'ATH: No, because it is a statutory entity as opposed to a statutory body, so it is not declared that way so consequently it cannot be required by the parliamentary committee. Through my Director-General I am more than happy to have Rachel Hunter address the committee.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, Jobs Queensland was budgeted \$40 million and I believe \$10 million in its first year—bearing in mind that it was budgeted to be established last year, which never happened—so why have you and the department only spent 10 per cent of its allocated money to date for such a 'great organisation', as you keep calling it, despite not being established properly?

Mrs D'ATH: I certainly disagree with the statement by the member in relation to not being established properly. We are taking a proper process with regard to the establishment of Jobs Queensland. This is a board that I hope will continue well into the future. We want to make sure that we establish it properly and that we have the highest quality people on this board, so it made sense to establish an interim reference group while we made sure that we get the best people for the board on a permanent basis. It is a good thing to take time and not rush these processes or throw people on a board and make appointments without due consideration.

Mr BLEIJIE: Why would you not have advertised six months ago and then spent the last six months looking for the best people? You have only just advertised for board positions in the last two weeks. If you wanted to spend time looking at candidates, why would you not have advertised early in the year and then see who comes forward? Now I suspect you will have at least 250 candidates and you will go through a merit-based selection process for those individuals. It will take more time and the interim board will continue to operate. That could have all been done six months ago and you could have been assessing the candidates for the last six months: why haven't you?

Mrs D'ATH: As I stated to the member already, we made a decision to establish an interim reference group first and then to go through the process of a permanent appointment process. It is fair to say, as I have already outlined today, that I do not believe that it in any way has diminished the role of Jobs Queensland or taken away from it by having all of that work already done and started and engagement with industry stakeholders right from the beginning. It is still important that we made sure that we went through a process in appointing the interim reference group and then appointing the permanent Jobs Queensland board. Again, the member seems to think that if we had got the board in place earlier somehow the work would be different. The work is being done. The work has been done since January of this year. No matter how many times the member tries to insinuate that nothing has been done, it is all there and there is a very long list of work that has been done, compared to the previous government's ministerial industry council, which released one report and did nothing else and certainly was not independent of government.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, I seek leave to table a document.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have 10 copies, and if one can be given to the Attorney-General as well please, Chair. While you are getting a copy of that, Minister, the document that I have tabled is a cabinet-in-confidence economic policy document prepared by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. Minister, if you look at the top of the page—and I have given you the benefit of highlighting the part that I want to refer to—you will see 1.01. Can you tell the committee what that says under ‘Job Creation’ please—the highlighted 1.01?

Mrs D’ATH: I might first highlight—and I know this has been highlighted many times in parliament itself—that this is a document that is headed ‘Not Government Policy—Draft for Discussion Only’. As much as the opposition have tried very hard to make this a government document, in fact it is not. Having said that, it says—

Establish Jobs Queensland—Implement Easy

It was easy to have an interim reference group established within four weeks and a huge body of work already done in the first six months.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is not quite true, Minister, because this document, despite you saying it is not government policy, is cabinet-in-confidence. It is the economic policy drafted by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and it says that the establishment of Jobs Queensland was an election commitment by the Palaszczuk government, of which you are a part. It says that the implementation of that was easy. I note you said that it was easy to establish an interim panel within four weeks but, Minister, your government was elected in early 2015 and we had the bill go through the parliament at the end of 2015. The Jobs Queensland interim board was then established in January 2016. Was it easy? For other ministers it may have been easy but for you it was just too hard and it was put in the too-hard basket. If the Department of the Premier and Cabinet says it is easy, can you explain to me how easy it was to establish despite it taking 12 months to even get the interim board established?

Mrs D’ATH: I thank the member for his question. As the member knows, this bill was introduced and it went through a proper parliamentary committee process in which a report was delivered and the matter was debated before the parliament and the bill was passed and then assented to in January. Passing legislation, unless you are going to rush it through overnight, takes time. You actually have to go through a proper process to allow consultation and get community feedback on what is proposed in the legislation as far as how a new body should be set up. Our government, on coming into government, ensured we had proper consultation in developing the legislation before we introduced it. We then made sure it was a bill that went through a proper parliamentary committee process for consideration. It went through proper debate in the House and, when it was passed, we then sought to start implementing it. Our election commitment was to develop and establish Jobs Queensland in government and we have delivered on that.

Mr BLEIJIE: Minister, I put to you that if the Department of the Premier and Cabinet was saying that the establishment of Jobs Queensland was easy, I would really hate to see if it had of been hard and when it would have been established if it takes over 12 months to get a panel not even established yet! It is over 12 months. It has been 18 months since your government was elected on a jobs package. In your document it says, ‘Jobs now, jobs for the future and major work in Queensland initiatives,’ and it even says, ‘Jobs Queensland—skilling Queenslanders for work’. If it was that easy and it takes you a year and a half, I would hate to see what would have happened if it was deemed hard.

I have a question to the director-general with respect to Jobs Queensland, and I refer to the SDS at page 28 at item 6. It says ‘decrease mainly due to deferral of Jobs Queensland’. Can you explain to me why in the department’s document Jobs Queensland was deferred?

Dr Watterston: Deferrals obviously refer to the end of financial years when money has not been expended that we defer and then in this case rephrase a portion of the funding to the out years.

Mr BLEIJIE: Where it says on page 28, Director-General, ‘decrease mainly due to deferral of Jobs Queensland expenditure’, I understand the budget had \$10 million to be expended. Why was it deferred?

Dr Watterston: The \$10 million had not been expended. The reason it had not been expended, as the minister explained, is that in the interim reference group, in setting up Jobs Queensland itself in terms of the creation of the policies, the admin and the structures, we have not expended the \$10 million. It is a \$40 million expenditure over four years, so it has been deferred and rephased over the out years, for the three years.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, the document I tabled before from Premier and Cabinet had it as an easy implementation of Jobs Queensland. You have just advised that out of the \$10 million in 2015-16 only \$850,000 was expended in Jobs Queensland. It was deferred because other expenditure

was deferred. If it was an easy implementation and Jobs Queensland in the department of education was to be established, how did the department get it so wrong whereby they thought \$10 million would have to be budgeted but the department only spent \$850,000? The department obviously intended to spend the \$10 million in having Jobs Queensland established within the time frame. Is that correct?

Dr Watterston: What is correct is that the allocation for Jobs Queensland over the four years of planning will be expended and, as the minister has outlined, there is an array of work that has already started and will continue to progress in terms of research and the identification of having the right skills in the right place and the right location. Let me just say that the expenditure has been limited in the set-up period for all the reasons that have been explained to you, but the work will continue and that funding is required in terms of the job ahead for Jobs Queensland.

Mr BLEIJIE: With the new board to be established, which, as I noted earlier, has been advertised, will the new board not then have a look at expenditure? What if the new board is established and they have a different view to the interim board that has been operating for six months? Am I correct in saying that the new board could take Jobs Queensland in a completely different direction to what the interim board is?

Dr Watterston: I am not here to speculate on what the new board will do, but I just repeat that the interim reference group has been involved in making sure that the structures for the board's operation and the governance and the work going forward has been set in place. Personally I think it is unlikely that a new board would have a completely different direction, but one of the key features of Jobs Queensland is that it is an independent board and, being independent, it will provide independent advice that will be useful for our department in terms of the VET investment plan.

Mr BLEIJIE: You said 'unlikely', but possible in that case?

Dr Watterston: I am not here to speculate on what the new board will do.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, that is a hypothetical question, so I will ask you to answer what parts of that question you can.

Dr Watterston: I think the key element to the interim reference group and the appointed board going forward is that it will be the same chair. As we have already identified today, the chair has been appointed. Under that chair, the board will operate in the way that it has been set up. The interim reference group is laying the foundation for that board once they are appointed.

Mr BLEIJIE: Speaking of the chair, Director-General, the minister advised before that the chair, Rachel Hunter, was appointed some two weeks ago.

Dr Watterston: About that time, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: That is fine. We had an advertisement in the paper on 2 July for board members. Did Rachel Hunter as chair go through a merit based selection process and was her position, as chair of that board, advertised?

Dr Watterston: I will hand over to my Deputy Director-General, Suzanne Wauchope, who has helped manage that process.

Ms Wauchope: The chair was actually not appointed through a meritorious process. It was actually done, as was agreed, through a direct appointment process. There were a number of suitable candidates, though, that we did identify as a department that we then forwarded through to the minister for her consideration.

Mr BLEIJIE: Deputy Director-General, the Premier has on numerous occasions externally talked about, with regard to the appointment of the chairs of these boards and so forth, the importance of merit based selection. You have just advised this committee that Rachel Hunter was a direct appointment and did not go through a merit based selection process. Correct?

Ms Wauchope: Not entirely. There was absolutely an assessment of the—

Mr BLEIJIE: Not entirely?

Ms Wauchope: There was absolutely an assessment of the credentials of the individuals that we assessed before we advised those names through to the minister for her consideration.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, would it not be a broken election commitment where the Premier and you, through the government, have said that these appointments will be a merit based selection process whereas this committee has just ascertained that Rachel Hunter was appointed by a direct appointment process—not merit based selection, no advertisement, and we do not know who the other candidates were? Is it not a broken election commitment that these appointments would be merit based processes?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. As the member pointed out, there was not an external expression-of-interest process. Certainly when we talk about merit based processes, not all of those go to an open application process. The most important thing here is merit based appointments and I do not think there is anyone in this room or outside of this room who could challenge Rachel Hunter as far as her experience and capabilities and that this is an appointment determined on merit. As you appreciate—

Mr BLEIJIE: We cannot because we do not know who else applied. We do not know who else applied so how can we challenge it?

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, allow the minister to answer your question.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister asked me—

CHAIR: No. You will—

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr BLEIJIE: Point of order: the minister asked a rhetorical question back to me. I am answering the minister's question.

CHAIR: No, it is not up to you to answer the questions.

Mr BLEIJIE: The minister asked me a question.

CHAIR: No. You asked the question and the minister is answering that. You might not like the answer, but you asked the question.

Mrs D'ATH: Thank you, Chair. The merit selection process is exactly that—making sure that the people we choose for boards are appointed based on merit and merit alone, and I think that is extremely important. I am sure that, as a former attorney-general, the member understands transparency around appointments are important and merit—

Mr BLEIJIE: Who else applied? Who else applied for the job?

Mrs D'ATH: I did what many do in relation to board appointments and looked at, as far as the chair and recommendation of the chair for the board, the register of boards—the register that the government has, which the member would be well aware of—where people put forward their CVs and their interest in being members of boards of government.

Mr BLEIJIE: Who else applied, Minister?

Mrs D'ATH: That is a regular, well-known process—

Mr BLEIJIE: Who applied for the job?

Mrs D'ATH: I do not know of too many processes where any government of any persuasion goes and releases a list of everyone it considers for appointments.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did anyone else apply?

CHAIR: Minister, unfortunately we are out of time for non-government questions.

Mr BLEIJIE: Lucky for you!

CHAIR: We will now go to government members, and I go back to the Training Ombudsman. I refer to page 11 of the SDS and I ask you to explain to the committee the proactive functions of the Office of the Training Ombudsman and how they have been engaging in their particular role since inception.

Mrs D'ATH: Thank you, Chair. I can advise that as at 30 June there were 207 complaints received in the Training Ombudsman's office. Over 35 per cent of those complaints have come from outside of South-East Queensland. Some 172 of these are finalised, with students continuing to study, apprentices continuing their apprenticeships or students receiving fee refunds or waivers, with over 350 Queenslanders benefiting from investigations.

One example is one complaint related to allegations that over 120 apprentices were not receiving their full range of work. The Office of the Training Ombudsman has achieved over \$96,000 in fee refunds and waivers for students, and 81 per cent of complainants achieved their desired outcome. It received 48 formal inquiries relating to training issues and/or helping people to navigate the complex VET system and delivered presentations to over 600 stakeholders across Queensland. The Training Ombudsman is not only there to be reactive and to deal with complaints as they come in but certainly has a very proactive role out there as well.

The Acting Training Ombudsman has been across Queensland holding these presentations to over 600 stakeholders and has reviewed and provided a report on the quality of training to electrical apprentices. The report outlined recommendations to ensure that all apprentices are provided with access to the full range of work, addressing issues related to the veracity and integrity of the Capstone test and ensuring links between the completion of the apprenticeship and access to relevant licences. I will have more to say on this particular area in the future. We have identified, as a direct result of the work of the office of the Training Ombudsman, an issue with the quality of training around electrical apprentices. We are now working with the stakeholders about rectifying those issues.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Once again, maintaining the reference to page 11 of the SDS, could you inform the committee of the details in regard to the types of actions taken by the office of the Training Ombudsman in relation to resolving those issues and, in some cases, ensuring refunds to impacted students as a result of those investigations?

Mrs D'ATH: Just going further to some of those statistics that I just gave the chair, issues were raised by several apprentices following a range of work that they had been undertaking at their former employer. Following a review and investigation of the issue, all apprentices received adequate training and experienced the required range of work. Another student had travelled to Brisbane to attend a course. Upon arriving in Brisbane, she checked her emails from a few days prior and discovered that she had been sent a notice that the course had been cancelled. The Training Ombudsman contacted the registered training organisation and negotiated for the student to be reimbursed for her return airfare and one night's accommodation.

Another example was a mother who complained that her child had experienced difficulty in completing a VET in school qualification before school finished. Due to the extenuating circumstances that existed, the office of the Training Ombudsman negotiated with the Department of Education and Training to enable the student to complete the qualification at no cost and with no impact on the entitlement to subsidised training, including the year 12 fee-free initiative.

Another example is an apprentice who had his training contract cancelled. The Training Ombudsman requested that the Department of Education and Training review this decision to cancel the training contract. This review was undertaken and the training contract for the apprentice was reinstated. This is one that I want to particularly point out because, without the Training Ombudsman, more than likely we would not have known about this situation. The contract was cancelled. It was received within the Department of Education and Training. It was dealt with as a normal training contract under the new legislation, which allowed for those cancellations to happen as a matter of course and there would be no further action other than going to ASQA in relation to the training organisation, which could then undergo an investigation, could potentially be shown cause and all of those things that I mentioned earlier, but it would not help this individual trainee. This individual trainee needed help there and then in relation to their training contract that had been cancelled. It was because of the intervention of the Acting Training Ombudsman that we were able to see this apprentice's training contract reinstated.

These all might sound like very small issues, but some of these courses are not cheap, as we know. That includes VET FEE-HELP courses, I might say. The Training Ombudsman is certainly able to take any complaints about that. But signing up for thousands of dollars worth of a course, in which they do not have the skills to undertake that course, it is questionable whether the course is being delivered at all and, if it is, whether that person is capable of completing it without some other training before leading up to that qualification—I suspect that the office of the Training Ombudsman will get busier in times to come.

As a government, our absolute priority is making sure that we have quality training in this state. Quality training is everything. The reputation of the training sector is everything, domestically nationally and internationally, because if all people hear is negative stories in the media about the delivery of training, even though it might be a small number of RTOs, it affects the whole training sector. That can have significant effects, considering that international education federally is the largest service export for this country. I believe that it is our second largest service export in this state. To get any damage to our reputation in relation to training can have real impacts not just for the individuals but also to the economy.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. I understand that the member for Lytton has some questions regarding Back to Work.

Ms PEASE: Thank you, Minister. The Back to Work package contains an extra \$10 million under the Certificate 3 Guarantee, as outlined on page 44 of Budget Paper No. 4. Could you please detail what this means for Queenslanders seeking training and skills and when seeking employment?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. Certainly, the primary purpose of Back to Work is about job incentives. It is about creating incentives for employers to put on more workers. They might be apprentices and trainees or they might be employed as full-time workers or part-time workers. It is about increasing employment opportunities for people.

This is particularly important, because the Commonwealth had an apprentice incentive program that they ceased and we are seeing the consequences of that, because that financial incentive has gone away. It is really important to have that financial incentive, especially in the regions. We know that there will be occasions where employers are wanting to take up these job opportunities and the people—the long-term unemployed, or the youth unemployed whom we are trying to match them with—might need some extra training, or retraining to upskill to take on those jobs, especially mature age workers who have been in the workforce for many, many years, or maybe in the same job for many years. They have found themselves redundant or unable to do their job physically anymore and are needing to upskill. Those people are much more likely to become long-term unemployed unless they get that retraining, that reskilling to get back into the workforce and take up other occupations.

That is what the \$10 million is about. It is about providing additional funding—so not pulling on the additional Certificate 3 Guarantee funding pool under the VET Investment Plan—to support those coming through Back to Work who are needing that training and skills to take up those employment opportunities. We are making sure that eligible jobseekers will have access to that Certificate 3 Guarantee without taking away placements and opportunities for other people who are generally accessing the Certificate 3 Guarantee across Queensland.

Ms PEASE: Thank you, Minister. Further to that, with regard to these incentive payments on offer through the Back to Work packages, as you have outlined in the budget papers, can you please outline what this will mean for employers who employ an apprentice under the scheme?

Mrs D'ATH: Sorry, is the member asking specifically about the financial incentive for employers?

Ms PEASE: Yes, that is correct. Thank you.

Mrs D'ATH: The financial incentive in the Back to Work program is up to \$15,000, as I understand it. It is \$10,000 to put on someone through the Back to Work initiative, but where these people are picking up people who are a particular cohort, such as long-term unemployed, there is an additional \$5,000.

I will take this opportunity—this is something that I have been talking about for two and a half years—to talk about the long-term unemployed. We all talk about youth unemployment. Of course, we need to talk about youth unemployment, but the long-term unemployed in this state almost doubled under the previous government. In just three years, it almost doubled. When we talk about long-term unemployed, we are talking about people who are unemployed for more than 52 weeks and then we are talking about people who have been unemployed for 104 weeks and more. Once you start getting into that category—and a lot of them are mature age workers—you start having serious troubles in finding employment.

I am sure that all of us have had constituents in our electorates coming up to us who are 55 and saying, 'Look, I'm a decade away from retiring, but I can't get a job. Everyone says that I'm too old.' We need to give them the opportunity and retraining to get back into employment. We know what it does to someone's self-esteem and dignity when they have worked all of their life to find themselves long-term unemployed. Then think about the consequences in that household—their families and their kids—because we could end up with generational unemployment once you have long-term unemployed. I am really pleased that the Back to Work program is focusing on not just youth unemployment but long-term unemployed, as does our Skilling Queenslanders for Work program as well.

Mrs MILLER: My question relates to the Skilling Queenslanders for Work program, specifically in my electorate. Challenge Employment and Training has received millions and millions of dollars over many years for training. It is located at the Westfalen mine at Redbank. It has over 200 acres of land. In the same area, we have the Westfalen Community Gardens, which was funded about 10 years ago by the health department. It is an extremely successful community garden. The gardens have been told that they may have to vacate some or all of the land that it uses at the Challenge Employment site because of the funding coming from the Queensland government under Skilling Queenslanders for Work.

So here we have one government department funding, basically, Skilling Queenslanders for Work with the result being the community gardens being thrown off the site. I am wondering whether you would consider putting into whatever contracts or whatever you can a provision that will save the community gardens. These community gardens provide fruit and vegetables for Anglicare, Meals on Wheels et cetera and it is a much-loved organisation in our community.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. I know community gardens are very worthwhile activities and things that bring people together in the community. I do not know if it is an edible community garden as well but, certainly, it helps towards healthy lifestyles. They are certainly a good thing. I am not aware of the particular project. When the member says that they may have to vacate, I would like to look at where that direction is coming from, because I do not know whose land that is.

Mrs MILLER: It is Challenge Employment's land and they are using Queensland government and other funding to move on the Westfalen Community Gardens. I am just trying to protect the community gardens—

Mrs D'ATH: And I appreciate that.

Mrs MILLER:—as a result of the funding.

Mrs D'ATH: Yes, and if it is their land—

Mrs MILLER: Yes.

Mrs D'ATH: I guess that complicates the issue—

Mrs MILLER: That is right—

Mrs D'ATH:—in that it is their private land. They can do what they wish to do in relation to their private land. I am more than happy to talk to the member about that particular program because, as I say, I am not personally aware of that one. I would hope that community organisations are working to support our community and where great activities like that are happening, making sure that they are complementing each other and not—

Mrs MILLER: That is not happening in this case, Minister. They are using the funding to basically move them on, or shut down part of the community garden. That is a shame. I am just asking for your assistance.

Mrs D'ATH: Sure. I am more than happy to meet personally with the member and follow up on that one.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Director-General, I refer to page 11 of the Education and Training SDS in relation to Queenslanders skilled to participate in the economy. Director-General, part of the government's Jobs Now, Jobs for the Future package included the Rural Job Agency. Can you tell me whether that has been established, please?

Dr Watterston: I will hand over to the Deputy Director-General, Suzanne Wauchope, who can talk about that.

Ms Wauchope: Sorry, member. Could you please refer me to the SDS reference?

Mr BLEIJIE: Page 11, with respect to Queenslanders skilled in participate in the economy with respect to the government's Jobs Now, Jobs for the Future Rural Job Agency. Can you tell me where that is established, please?

Ms Wauchope: I apologise, member, I am struggling to find the reference that you are referring to in the SDS on page 11.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is in relation to Queenslanders skilled to participate in the economy. The department has established—and the minister has spoken about it before—the Rural Job Agency, which is in the government's document *Jobs now, jobs for the future*. I am just trying to ascertain where this agency is. It is in the department of education. I am just trying to ascertain where it is located.

Ms Wauchope: It is not currently sitting within the Training and Skills portfolio. It may be in another part of the department, but I am also aware that there are other areas that we work with across government. It may be residing in the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. I would have to take that question on notice.

Mrs D'ATH: I can answer that. It sits within the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. It is a question you would need to put to Minister Donaldson.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to training, particularly in regional Queensland, and you have talked about Back to Work programs this morning, what involvement have you had with your ministerial colleagues with respect to the establishment of that organisation as far as it relates to Skilling Queenslanders for Work and so forth?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. On that particular body, as I say, it falls within the portfolio responsibility of Minister Donaldson. In relation to how the engagement would happen in that area, I can advise that once again that is something that Jobs Queensland is actually responsible to do: to work with these other training initiatives and these other training bodies that are being set up to look at what we can do to support jobs out in the regions, because we know the agriculture sector is just as important. I know that that is an area that Rachel Hunter has been looking at as well.

I would have to go back to the big long list of stakeholders and the things that Jobs Queensland has already been doing, but as I understand it they have already been meeting with the Australian Sugar Milling Council on issues. I would expect that there is already engagement with the agriculture sector and they will be engaging with the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance.

Mr BLEIJIE: I think you will find that it has not been established. It is sitting in limbo, a bit like Jobs Queensland. It seems all these jobs things are sitting in limbo; nothing has been happening for 18 months.

Could I please ask for the director of TAFE to come to the table. I refer to page 11 of the SDS with respect to TAFE. The government's position on their policy in terms of TAFE, the \$34 million expenditure, has been under the headline 'Rescuing TAFE'. The definition of 'rescue' is saving someone from a dangerous or difficult situation, for example, 'A fireman rescued a man trapped in a river.' With the policy that you have been asked to implement about rescuing TAFE, how is it that out of \$34 million you have only managed to spend about \$4.5 million? Is it that TAFE did not need rescuing?

CHAIR: Ms Schmidt, I will get you to answer the question in a manner such that it does not offend standing orders, which it does presently. Without getting the member to rephrase it I will have you answer that with your best capability.

Ms Schmidt: Thank you, and thank you for the question. TAFE Queensland, under the government's Rescuing TAFE policy, has been allocated over three years \$22.8 million. This money is to be committed to investing in student support services, providing foundation skills courses for disadvantaged learners, increasing courses available under VET in Schools, expanding and improving regional support programs, subsidised second-chance training opportunities and creating new full-time-equivalent positions in order to support that. The allocation for 2015-16, under agreement with the administering department, was for \$5 million of that, and \$4.5 million has been spent in those areas around providing additional student support services through the staffing and 2,729 training places that have been offered. Next year, \$9 million of the \$22.8 million will be available in 2016-17 and we expect 3,700 student training places and the additional support services will continue to be delivered.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to the \$34 million and a question on notice that has been recently answered, No. 9 with respect to estimates prehearing, you have indicated TAFE Queensland has expended \$4.056 million out of the \$34 million, which was the Rescuing TAFE expenditure, on investing in student support services, foundation skills for disadvantaged learners, increasing courses available under VET in Schools et cetera. There does not seem to be any money spent on actually getting more students into TAFE or rescuing it. I find it odd that a government policy implemented through the department about rescuing something only expends \$4 million out of \$34 million.

Ms Schmidt: I can only answer to the allocation of the funding in terms of the program and that the 2,700-odd student places that were offered would not have otherwise been offered without that funding. It is offered to individuals who are long-term jobseekers or otherwise are disadvantaged in some way. Therefore, I guess there is an element of providing a service that otherwise would not have been provided.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect to that same question on notice No. 9, it is there in an answer the Attorney has given with respect to TAFE that the extra money will provide for training in emerging innovative industries through advice given by Jobs Queensland. Can you explain to the committee what advice you have received from Jobs Queensland so far?

Ms Schmidt: There has not been any formal advice from Jobs Queensland to date in terms of informing emergent training, although we have had early preliminary discussions around some research that TAFE Queensland has undertaken and recently released with the CSIRO around the appropriate skills that will be needed to be delivered in order to meet the jobs demands of the future. I anticipate in the coming year's allocation, as outlined in that response, emergent training needs as the program progresses.

Mr BLEIJIE: So Jobs Queensland have given no advice to TAFE Queensland with respect to the answer to the question on notice; is that correct?

Ms Schmidt: Not to date.

Mr BLEIJIE: As part of your numbers of TAFE and the \$34 million, I notice in answer to question on notice No. 10 from the estimates prehearing you have advised that TAFE numbers, particularly in the last two years, have been on the decline in metropolitan Brisbane, Gold Coast, regional south-west, regional North Queensland, regional Sunshine and Wide Bay coasts. Those figures show a decline over the last two years particularly in TAFE numbers. Are those figures that you have answered in that question on notice correct to today's date and there has been a decline in all these TAFE numbers?

Ms Schmidt: That question on notice was specifically around campus based delivery, and the numbers that have been provided are correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: So there has been a decline in all areas across Queensland of numbers in TAFE Queensland on campuses?

Ms Schmidt: TAFE Queensland on-campus delivery, of course, is reducing in terms of the way in which we deliver. We now deliver in a variety of ways, including workplace training, recognised prior learning and a variety of online and blended technology enabled ways. Of course, what also occurred in 2014 was the opening up of the training market to contestability. The contestability agenda means previously government funded training is now available to an open market and we contest the market in the same way that any other market does. In that regard we have seen a reduction in student numbers over time. Similarly, reductions and fluctuations in the way in which governments have spent money or allocated subsidies to training have an impact on that. What you are seeing is the results of the policy direction taken through 2012 through to today.

Mr BLEIJIE: Page 11 of the SDS talks about the Strategic Training Asset Management Plan. Will any TAFE campuses be sold off under that Strategic Training Asset Management Plan?

Ms Schmidt: The Strategic Training Asset Management Plan is being led by the department and TAFE Queensland is providing support to the development of that 10-year plan. There have not been any decisions made, to my knowledge. It has been a consultation process to date to which TAFE Queensland has input and a number of consultation sessions have been held across the state. From TAFE Queensland's perspective, we are interested in ensuring that we have fit-for-purpose facilities to be able to deliver to Queenslanders across the state into the future.

Mr BLEIJIE: Did TAFE have a budget surplus last year before the \$34 million additional money was given by the government?

Ms Schmidt: TAFE Queensland reported a statutory surplus of \$75 million, of which some was carryover, but an operating surplus, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: I am confused. TAFE had a \$75 million surplus. The government then said it needed rescuing and gave a further \$34 million. We are over \$100 million to one organisation. There are plenty of organisations, and charity organisations, I know in Queensland that would actually need rescuing. You sit now with a \$100 million surplus; is that correct?

Ms Schmidt: I am not sure it is appropriate to add the two together.

Mr BLEIJIE: Let us put it this way: you have advised this committee there was a \$75 million TAFE surplus prior to the \$34 million additional. You have not spent the money so it is sitting somewhere, right?

Ms Schmidt: TAFE Queensland is a \$700 million business and the \$75 million surplus, if it was entirely surplus—as I said, half of it was carryover of funds to actually replace ICT systems, which continues in this financial year. If we take the \$35 million, if we call that the operating surplus, it is a very moderate surplus for an organisation \$700 million in nature and, of course, those surpluses are used to reinvest into a variety of things, whether it be our facilities maintenance, the additionality of teachers and teaching resources, the additionality of training students or, in fact, of course, large investment in terms of the equipment, ICT systems and the like that we need to reach regional Queensland. It is a very marginal surplus at best. The Rescuing TAFE fund is being used specifically for the delivery of specific training and reported and acquitted to the department as is appropriate. I would argue that those funds are not available for distribution.

Mr BLEIJIE: Instead of the \$34 million additional, why would you not just use the \$75 million you have sitting in the bank there?

Ms Schmidt: We are a business. We provide training for revenue and we balance that with expenditure and we manage that.

Mr BLEIJIE: But your numbers are declining.

Ms Schmidt: Numbers are declining because we have an open marketplace and are competing. You will find that numbers are fluctuating up and down in a year in different areas of the training market, as you will see on an ongoing basis both across the state and nationally.

Mr BLEIJIE: Have TAFE given advice to the education department with respect to that Strategic Training Asset Management Plan that there are some campuses that can be closed down or sold off?

Ms Schmidt: We have provided advice that says that we have tracked population growth and employer demand where we expect industrial changes to take place and we have mapped that across our delivery footprint and made recommendations around the sites which we need to occupy in order to move into the future.

Mr BLEIJIE: With that advice that you have given, is there advice contained that would ascertain that there are some campuses that you do not need to fulfil your duties in TAFE?

Ms Schmidt: As was responded to question on notice No. 10, we are occupying currently 80 per cent of the campuses that we occupy today. There are some sites that have no buildings on and are vacant land; there are some sites that have been vacated previously and are likely to be used for other purposes, as is normal process.

Mr BLEIJIE: With respect, you are not quite answering my question. I want to know whether there are TAFE campuses and facilities that you have advised the government can be sold off or disposed of because they are surplus to requirements.

Ms Schmidt: We have provided advice that says we continue to be committed to the same number of sites that we are today. In fact, we have given advice to expand the number of sites. The condition of the current sites would be determining whether it is appropriate to reinvest in those sites, change the scale of those sites or, in fact, invest in new sites.

Mr BLEIJIE: Your numbers of TAFE are going down. You have \$100 million sitting there to spend, TAFE needed rescuing—and it does not appear it needed rescuing because you have a lot of money there but numbers are going down—you are only utilising 80 per cent of your campuses and you are now talking about building more campuses? I cannot work it out. Your numbers are going down, you have \$100 million, you are only at 80 per cent capacity and you have just advised this committee you are looking at building more campuses.

Ms Schmidt: I think we are taking a very single-sided view. The total land holding and the configuration of those campuses, with an average age of 30 years, the changing face of training and the way in which it is delivered to meet future needs means that those things have to change. They are pragmatic things that happen all the time. The utilisation rates achieved by TAFE Queensland are ahead of and greater than Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association benchmarks, and we are continually doing our utmost to make sure that we deliver the best services to Queenslanders.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Lytton for one last question before we break.

Ms PEASE: Minister, in relation to page 11 of the SDS, could you please provide the number of apprenticeship commencements and completions for the period of 2012 onwards?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. I note that certainly in the SDS it is noted that there has been a decline in commencements in apprenticeships and traineeships of almost seven per cent—a drop of 2,700. We would prefer not to see a drop at all but there certainly has been a decline. Looking at that SDS and that performance target, we need to put that into the context of what else is happening nationally. The overall national decline for apprenticeships and traineeships was 10 per cent in 2015 and, in fact, Queensland had the lowest decline in our jurisdiction. When we talk about TAFE and declining numbers, I should say the bulk of the declining numbers across TAFE Queensland with student numbers happened between 2012 and 2015, when we saw a significant reduction.

Mr Bleijie interjected.

CHAIR: Member for Kawana, you will cease your interjections.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Chair, 18 months she has been the minister.

CHAIR: You will cease your interjections or I will come to the point of having to warn you like last year. Carry on, Minister.

Mrs D'ATH: We have seen a dramatic slowdown in the reduction of student number declines in TAFE, which is a positive thing because we are talking in the tens of thousands of members. As far as the data in the SDS is concerned, it is pleasing to be able to report that the latest National Centre for Vocational Education Research data on government funded students and courses, which was released on 4 July, shows that Queensland was the only jurisdiction in Australia to experience an increase in overall government funded student numbers, up by 7.3 per cent. The member asked how this compares to previous years. With the decline in apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, there were 2,700 in 2015. We compare that to 2,013 under the previous government where apprenticeship and traineeship commencements fell by 16,900 in 2013—

Mr BLEIJIE: I rise a point of order, Mr Chair. I thought we were looking at the budget estimates for the Labor government's budget of the past 12 months, not that from 2012. If the Attorney wants to answer about the reduction in numbers in the last 18 months of TAFE and training, that would be good for the committee, because she is a few years behind in estimates.

CHAIR: There is no point of order. The minister is responding to the member's question.

Mrs D'ATH: It is important when those people make public statements about declining numbers and criticism of government policy that they put those comments into context. What we saw was a decline of 16,900 apprenticeships and traineeships in 2013, and another 12,600 in 2014. This was a reduction of 29,500 apprenticeships and traineeships, which is an approximately 42 per cent reduction in two years, so I can understand why the member for Kawana does not want me talking about this.

Mr BLEIJIE: I want to talk about your reduction in the last 18 months; your track record.

CHAIR: Order!

Mrs D'ATH: Regarding apprentices and trainees, I note for the member that the SDS also talks about a decline in completions for apprenticeships and traineeships. Again I note why this year's SDS shows a decline in completions. You have to remember that someone does not start and complete an apprenticeship or traineeship in a matter of months, especially apprenticeships. They are generally over a matter of years. What we are seeing is a direct correlation in the decline of apprenticeship and traineeship completions for the latest data based on a decline in apprenticeship and traineeship numbers under the previous government. When less people started back in 2012 and 2013, not surprisingly, in 2015 and 2016 we see data showing less completions of apprenticeships and traineeships. Also we have seen a steep decline in traineeships as a consequence of cuts in federal funding. We will be watching very closely—

Mr CRANDON: It is everybody else's fault. It is the federal government's fault. It is the last government's fault.

CHAIR: Order!

Mr CRANDON: None of it is your fault, yet the numbers are going down.

CHAIR: Keep going, Minister.

Mrs D'ATH: It is important to note that when we talk about this year's budget and the impact on training and what is happening in the broader training market, you have to look at the fact that we are now \$10 million worse off each year as a consequence of the National Partnership Agreement on TAFE Fee Waivers for Child Care Qualifications, which ended at the end of 2014; training places for single and teenage parents, which ended at the end of 2014—\$5.7 million per annum—and joint group training programs project agreement funding that also ended in 2014-15—another \$2.5 million in cuts. Anyone who thinks that those sorts of cuts in training do not have flow-on impacts to the states are not across the training sector at all and do not understand the impacts that it has.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The committee will now stand adjourned for 15 minutes. We will resume after that time for the consideration of the proposed expenditure for the statutory bodies within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank my department for their great work.

Proceedings suspended from 10.33 am to 10.53 am

 **CHAIR:** The estimates hearing for the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will be focusing on the proposed expenditure for the statutory bodies within the portfolio of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice. Minister, you have the opportunity to make an opening statement.

Mrs D'ATH: Thank you very much, Chair and committee members. I am proud to be part of the Palaszczuk government that is delivering a justice system that better serves the people of Queensland. This budget ensures Queenslanders have access to an effective, responsive and efficient justice system. We are committed to providing accessible and effective justice, providing the support and court systems Queenslanders deserve. We are committed to working with the legal profession to achieve these aims.

This government knows that court staff right around the state are dealing with an increasing workload of complex matters. The provision of an additional \$20 million over two years represents the greatest injection of support to court services in more than a decade and will be used, in part, to respond to increased domestic and family violence proceedings, Land Court referrals and criminal law proceedings. It will increase accessibility to justice for Queenslanders and assist in effective and timely outcomes for practitioners and clients alike. Our commitment to improving access to justice has to translate to a long-term sustainable funding model for legal assistance services. However, while the need for those services grows, the revenue from LPITAF has been reducing and can no longer meet these funding commitments. In implementing a long-term funding model, this government has moved to provide certainty and sustainability for these important services.

We have delivered on our election commitment to review the available funding sources for Legal Aid Queensland, with a view to increasing over time the funding provided for state funded legal assistance services to the national average. This funding will enable Legal Aid Queensland to deliver vital domestic and family violence and child protection services, and other legal assistance services, including to those farmers across our state who continue to experience significant financial hardship.

As part of the government's almost \$200 million investment package to boost crucial domestic and family violence services, this department is also delivering for the continuation of the Southport pilot specialist DFV court independent evaluation until 30 June 2017. Subject to the Southport domestic violence court evaluation, there will be \$13.6 million over four years, commencing in 2017-18, to rollout specialist domestic violence courts to a number of other locations. Also, there will be \$11 million over the next four years to build the capacity of community justice groups in 18 discrete Indigenous locations and \$300,000 over three years to maintain funding to the Women's Legal Service helpline. These measures are proof of the government's leadership in this field and our commitment to providing a fair accessible effective justice system for Queensland.

The government has committed to introducing a new regime of laws to tackle serious organised crime in all its forms. The new regime will be operationally strong and legally robust. As part of our commitment to tackle organised crime in all of its forms, our budget delivers \$3.6 million over four years for crime intelligence hearings into organised crime; and increased funding of \$3.5 million over four years to continue confiscation proceedings in relation to participants in criminal organisations, unexplained wealth orders and a serious drug offender confiscation order scheme. It is imperative that the Office of the Director Public Prosecutions be properly resourced to pursue convictions of serious and organised criminals. Accordingly, the government has approved funding of \$12.136 million over four years for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. This funding will enable the office to increase its staffing by a further 26 positions, significantly boosting its efficiency and enabling a greater focus on securing convictions.

The government has approved \$8.4 million over three years for the establishment of a crime statistics body to collect data and monitor organised crime, as well as impacts and trends across all crime types. This body was also recommended by the commission of inquiry into organised crime and the task force on the organised crime legislation, to prioritise the collection of data on organised crime in Queensland. All of these funding measures, coupled with our robust legislative reform agenda, are designed to create a safer and more just Queensland for all.

Finally, in relation to the management and review of elections, I can announce that the government has decided to seek an independent review of the local government elections and referendum that were conducted earlier this year, as well as any findings from the recent Toowoomba South by-election. A panel of three members will be appointed to oversee the review and I will report back within three months from its commencement. This will add to the review done by the ECQ itself. I look forward to discussing this issue in more depth throughout the day.

Overall, this budget delivers for Queenslanders. It supports a fairer, more accessible and more efficient justice system.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. We will now go to the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: Despite some enticing issues that the Attorney-General has raised, I will start with Mr van der Merwe, the Electoral Commissioner. Mr van der Merwe, could you turn to page 91 of the SDS, where it talks about levels of informal voting. There is a target in respect of the effectiveness measure regarding the level of informal voting in a state general election, which has been set at eight per cent. Commissioner, what has been the historical level that you would set that target against? Looking back with your expertise over elections past, what has been the historical level in broad terms of informal voting in Queensland elections since 1991 or 1992?

Mr van der Merwe: Would it be right to give a bit of background in terms of the history of informality?

Mr WALKER: Yes.

Mr van der Merwe: ECQ has used optional preferential voting, which is OPV, to elect candidates at all state electoral events since its establishment in 1992. As you would know, Queensland parliament recently passed legislation to change the voting system of state events from OPV to full preferential voting, FPV. The voting systems: to cast a formal vote using OPV, the elector is required to indicate their first preference for the candidate of their choice. Although not required, the elector can indicate preferences to some or all of the remaining candidates on the ballot paper. To cast a formal vote in an FPV, which is the full preferential that we now have to work with at the state level, an elector must indicate the order of preferences for all the candidates on the ballot paper. That is a reasonably significant change. It is in line with the federal process.

Mr WALKER: Mr van der Merwe, I think we know the mechanics. I am really trying to look at the historical informal vote under OPV.

Mr van der Merwe: Informality: for the state general elections conducted in the years listed below, in 2015 it was 2.11 per cent; in 2012 it was 2.15 per cent; and in 2009 it was 1.94 per cent.

Mr WALKER: Commissioner, you are setting a target of eight per cent for the current year. Why is that and how did you come to that figure?

Mr van der Merwe: I did a bit of an analysis before I chose eight to put in the SDS. For the federal election, which uses FPV, in 2013 their informality was 5.13 per cent; in the federal election of 2010 it was 5.45; in the federal election of 2007 it was 3.56. FPV is very new. We used it for the first time last weekend in Toowoomba South. I chose eight. We did not go anywhere near eight, so far. It is a learning experience. The next time I do the SDS, I will certainly bring that down. The informality rate for the Toowoomba South by-election, as it stands at the moment—I have not finished that yet; I have to wait for all the postal votes to come in so I can do a full preferential vote count—is just over three per cent. I can attribute that success to the media campaign that I ran and the training of my electoral staff and the information that we provided the electors of Toowoomba South.

Mr WALKER: When you refer to it as a success, is that a success against your eight per cent target, not a success against history?

Mr van der Merwe: It is getting there. This is the first time we have done it. I believe with ongoing media campaigns and ongoing elector education programs we will get it down so at least it will be comparable to somewhere between federal elections and what we used to have with OPV in state general elections. I agree that eight per cent was reasonably generous.

Mr WALKER: When the Attorney introduced the legislation for, I am calling it, CPV—you have another name for it; FPV—compulsory preferential or full preferential voting, she indicated that one of the reasons she was doing it was to lower the informal vote. Can I assume from what you said in answer to question on notice No. 5—that ‘given the recent changes, making full preferential voting mandatory, the commission considered a higher target more appropriate’—that your professional view would not be that full preferential voting necessarily lowers the informal voting rate?

Mr van der Merwe: Not necessarily the first time round. Once electors are used to it and they appreciate that they have to mark every box it may be different. It is a matter of getting used to the new process. In the beginning it was the unknown. I had no idea how the electors of Toowoomba South were going to embrace FPV.

Mr WALKER: We might come back to Toowoomba South in a moment. If you say that in due course the informal vote is better, what series of figures do you base any such suggestion on that full preferential or compulsory preferential has ever anywhere been better than optional preferential when it comes to the informal voting rate?

Mr van der Merwe: As I said when we commenced, we have always used optional preferential voting. We are starting something new. As time goes by and electors become more familiar with the process I believe it will come down.

Mr WALKER: Is that a pious hope or are you basing that on something? You said before that your view was that the eight per cent target was set because it was new and things would get better. What have you got to base a view on, scientifically or experientially, as an experienced—

Mr van der Merwe: I do not have a scientific process.

Mr WALKER: You have no evidence on which to base a view that compulsory or full preferential voting will lower the informal rate?

Mr van der Merwe: With due respect, that is a policy decision. I just administer the legislation.

Mr WALKER: It is not a policy decision. The decision to change is a policy decision. You are an expert in voting, in voting operations and in voting trends. You just said to me before that your view was that, despite a high figure at the start, as people got used to the system we would have a better figure.

Mr van der Merwe: That is my belief. I believe it will reduce over time.

Mr WALKER: What is your belief based on, if it is your belief that compulsory preferential or full preferential voting can result in a lower informal voting rate? What experience or figures or series of figures can you tell the committee give rise to such a basis of your belief?

Mr van der Merwe: I will have to think about that, Mr Walker.

Mr WALKER: Can I ask the Attorney—

Mr van der Merwe: I will take it on notice, if that is all right, unless the Attorney wants to intervene.

Mr WALKER: If the Attorney is prepared to take that on notice. My question on notice is: what series of figures can be relied upon to show that full preferential or compulsory preferential voting actually lowers the informal vote? If the Attorney is happy to take that on notice, we will do that.

Mrs D'ATH: We are happy to take that on notice.

Mr WALKER: Were you consulted as part of the government's changes to scrap the optional preferential voting system?

Mr van der Merwe: No, I was not.

Mr WALKER: Does that surprise you, as an expert in these matters?

Mr van der Merwe: It is a government policy decision.

Mr WALKER: In the past would you normally have been consulted about such dramatic changes to our voting system?

Mr van der Merwe: Generally, no.

Mr WALKER: You have not been previously consulted about changes to the voting system by governments of any colour?

Mr van der Merwe: We have not changed the system. It has been OPV for state government elections since 1992. That is how I have been administering it since I was appointed.

Mr WALKER: You are not aware of the experience of your commission prior to that—whether it would be a normal thing to expect that the government might speak to the Electoral Commission about substantive voting changes?

Mr van der Merwe: It is their choice.

Mr WALKER: Attorney-General, why was the Electoral Commissioner not consulted on this significant change to our voting system?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. It was due to the very short time frames. The reason the ECQ was not consulted is that the LNP brought in its private member's bill on the Tuesday and sought to debate it on the Thursday. It was as a consequence of the private member's bill, which sought to increase the number of electoral divisions in this state and to change the way the Queensland Redistribution Commission operated and a number of other changes—which I presume the LNP did not consult with the ECQ on—being brought before the parliament and being declared urgent. That is what happened.

Mr WALKER: Attorney-General, that cannot be right. The LNP bill was on a subject matter quite different from this. In fact, you had to move a suspension of standing orders because your changes did not fit within the subject matter. It was an entirely different subject matter. You cannot say it was something that was brought on by the LNP bill. It had nothing to do with the subject matter of the LNP bill and you concede that yourself by virtue of the fact that you had to move the suspension of standing orders to bring in material that was outside the scope of that bill.

Mrs D'ATH: As the LNP had to move a motion to actually have this debated without it going through the parliamentary committee process or have any public consultation on the bill. As the member knows, and it has been the subject—

Mr CRANDON: It had been through the parliament twice.

CHAIR: Allow the Attorney to answer the question.

Mrs STUCKEY: It is misleading.

Mrs D'ATH: We can re-prosecute the debate on the bill, but that has been done—

Mr Crandon interjected.

CHAIR: Member for Coomera, allow the Attorney to answer the question.

Mrs D'ATH: The fact is that the amendments moved by the government during consideration in detail were in direct response to a private member's bill that was brought on urgently. A motion was passed to debate it within two days without it going through a parliamentary committee process. Consequently, the government responded to that private member's bill, when it became clear that the bill, in some form, was definitely going to go through the parliament—that it had the support of the crossbenchers to go through the parliament—and knowing that we were going to end up with 93 seats in this state with the new boundaries, by making a decision about what else we believed could be done to improve the electoral process in this state. We put forward those amendments during consideration in detail. If the LNP are not happy about that then, quite honestly, the only ones they should be looking at for answers are themselves, because they are the ones who brought the private member's bill forward.

Mr WALKER: The subject matter of your amendments was quite different to the private member's bill. We will come back in due course to whether it was an improvement to the system. The Premier in her estimates answers on Tuesday indicated that in fact the whole thing happened on the day of the debate and that you had the carriage of that matter. Can you explain to us what the decision-making process was that has led us to the outcome, with a potential eight per cent informal vote estimated in your papers?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I will go to the proposed or expected eight per cent. As the commissioner has just said, that in fact was quite a generous figure in relation to the possible consequences of a voting change, that being compulsory preferential voting, or full preferential voting as the Electoral Commission calls it.

Mr WALKER: Do you accept it as reasonable?

Mrs D'ATH: The good news, as the commissioner stated in his answer to the question on notice, as I understand it, is that the range for informal voting for Queensland elections is generally between two and four per cent. We have tested this new voting system for the first time at the Toowoomba South by-election. We are seeing an informal vote of around 3.21 per cent. What that shows is that, at the first opportunity voters had to test compulsory preferential voting, informal votes were kept within the existing range of two to four per cent. I believe in the long term what we will see, because of the consistency between federal and state elections as far as compulsory preferential voting is concerned, is more positive results.

As a local member I know that people are constantly criticising the fact that it is a different scheme for each election. In the 2016 local government elections informal votes were 4.34 per cent, despite there being in many council divisions optional preferential voting. I think a result of 3.21 per cent speaks for itself. The doom and gloom that the LNP talked about did not happen.

Mr WALKER: We will have a closer look at that 3.21 per cent. I am not as confident that it is so hot. We will have a look at that. You have been talking to people in Redcliffe who have told you how terrible it is that they may vote informally with the systems we have. I will ask you the same question I asked the commissioner: what series of figures do you have to back up the statement you made in the House when you were introducing this that optional preferential voting leads to a higher level of informal voting than full preferential voting? What series of figures or evidence do you have?

Mrs D'ATH: What I rely on is the fact that the community has been asking for consistency in the way that voting occurs at a state and federal level for a long time. By making this change we are creating that consistency. I believe consistency certainly will lead to improvements. The LNP can be asked exactly the same question about where it gets its predictions that we will see a significant increase in informal votes. The fact is that consistency inevitably will bring greater efficiencies. I believe with proper education—and we saw that from the Electoral Commission with the Toowoomba South by-election—for the community about compulsory preferential voting we will see informal voting, at the very least, stay within the two to four per cent range, which is a good thing.

CHAIR: We will go to government questions now. Keeping with the ECQ, I refer to page 90 of the SDS. I would like the minister to update the committee on the role of the ECQ in reviewing local government elections.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the chair for his question. As I stated in my opening remarks, the government has made a decision to conduct a local government election review, a review of the referendum and a review of the Toowoomba South by-election. We did this because, as we know, after elections there are issues raised by members of parliament, issues raised by candidates and issues raised by constituents in relation to postal votes and the receipt of postal applications, the management of booths on the day, pre-poll voting, delays in counting or the time frame for counting and declaring seats. As members and candidates we have all heard about these issues. They happen at every level of government. We see this after every federal election as well.

It is very important that we take an opportunity whenever elections are held to step back and do a review. Under the Electoral Act it is an automatic process that there is a review of state elections, but there is not actually a requirement to do that when it comes to local government elections, or a referendum for that matter. I know that the Electoral Commission has done an internal review and come up with recommendations about how it believes it can improve its effectiveness and efficiency when it comes to elections.

I believe that, to ensure we maintain the public confidence in our election process, which is a very important part of our democracy, we need to have an independent review. It will be headed by three people. We do not want this to be a longwinded review. We want it done in three months. I would not start the review until the Toowoomba South by-election is declared to give the ECQ time to finish its current work. I would expect that the review would be conducted and the panel would report back to me within three months. I can table for the benefit of committee members the terms of reference that we intend to give to the panel. I would also like to table for the benefit of committee members the ECQ's internal review. While I am mindful that this was an internal review, I believe it is important for transparency that I release the ECQ's internal review on its report.

In announcing that we are conducting an independent review, it is not meant as a criticism of the Electoral Commission of Queensland itself. We want to always look at what we can learn from the experience and what we can do better next time. I believe that we always need to strive to improve our practices when it comes to elections. We know that voters would like to get in and get out as quickly as possible. They would like to know the outcomes of elections as soon as possible, and we need to ensure we are putting in place the processes to achieve those aims and to have an adequate process in place.

CHAIR: Attorney, are you seeking leave to table that document?

Mrs D'ATH: I seek leave to table two documents, being the terms of reference and the ECQ review.

CHAIR: There being no objection, leave is granted. Attorney, in keeping with page 90 of the SDS, I refer you to the ECQ and, in particular, donations regarding the operations of the ECQ. Would the Attorney please outline the impact of the government's legislation on political donations and what has been seen as a result of disclosures?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the chair for his question. I know that he is, as we all are, very concerned about accountability and transparency in government. It is very important. As the member knows, one of the first actions of this government upon being elected was to undo the work of the former attorney-general who lifted the disclosure threshold of donations made to political parties from \$1,000 up to \$12,800. I personally think that was a shameful act to do if we are talking about transparency and accountability. When we talk about the importance of a democratic system and the importance of accountability to voters, we should be making sure that our political donations are clearly visible and

disclosed for everyone to see. Something is certainly not right about a government that would seek to hide the identity of such large donors. We know that we are not talking about a small number of donations. In a six-month period we are talking about hundreds of donations. In the second half of 2015 alone we are talking millions of dollars.

The ECQ's public disclosures show, for example, that in the six-month period to the end of 2015—the latest six-month disclosure that is public—under the former government's disclosure rules with a threshold of \$12,800 a massive 95 per cent of all donations would not have been disclosed. The identity of the entities making 95 per cent of those donations, those above \$1,000, to both the major parties would be kept secret—that is if Labor did not have the policy of voluntarily disclosing all donations over \$1,000.

We want to do more. The second half of 2015 is quite some time ago. The disclosure returns for this period were not due back to the ECQ until April of this year. On Tuesday the Premier announced that our government will be introducing real-time disclosure of donations to political parties so that electors have the benefit of knowing who is donating to parties before an election is held. It is simply about being honest with constituents. It is not difficult.

I want to make mention of today's *Courier-Mail* which has some commentary in relation to this matter. When the Leader of the Opposition, Tim Nicholls, was asked whether the LNP would support the measure, he said that the proposal was—

... 'scant on detail and seems almost like a thought bubble' but said it was personal practice to comply with all relevant rules.

He went on to say they would 'wait to see Labor's legislation when it gets round to it'. He then stated that the first the opposition had heard of the government's decision to pursue real-time disclosures was during the estimates hearing this week. It was one of the first pieces of legislation we changed when we came into government last year. We changed the act to specifically allow for the regulations to prescribe for more frequent disclosures so that we could move to real-time disclosures. We did that at the start of last year. For the Leader of the Opposition to say that this week is the first time he has heard about it from the Premier in estimates is quite extraordinary.

With all due respect to the Leader of the Opposition, I also want to say that when it comes to transparency around political donations I do not need the LNP's support; I need their compliance. They need to comply with the law. They need to disclose the donations not only according to the law but also according to their own fundraising guidelines. They should be disclosing every donation. Their own funding guidelines says to keep the name and contact details of everybody who donates to them. Yet 12 months on there is still \$100,000 for which the LNP cannot disclose the entities who made those donations.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 12 of the SDS regarding the work of Strategic Policy and Legal Services, would the minister please outline the strategies that the minister is developing to remove offensive slogans from Queensland roads?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. I know the member is passionate about this, along with many other people. I want to acknowledge the work of all political parties and all governments who have tried to deal with this issue over the years. I am very pleased to say that we have found a way forward to take offensive slogans off the road. It is an innovative solution, thinking a little out of the box as to how we address this issue. We have been confronted with this, as have other governments across Australia and overseas, and I have spoken to my New Zealand counterparts who are also seeking to deal with this issue. We are the first government to act in this way.

I understand the level of emotion and community concern that these vulgar, crass and offensive slogans cause. Until now the operators of these vehicles have ignored findings against them by the Advertising Standards Board. I have been determined that whatever solution we find it would not give the operators of these vehicles what they want, which is free publicity. By targeting the registration of commercial vehicles, operators have two choices: get rid of the slogans or see the vans off the road where they cannot be seen and cannot cause offence and are unable to generate revenue. What we are working to do with Minister Bailey is to amend the Transport Operations (Road Use Management) Act 1995 to introduce a process to allow the Department of Transport and Main Roads to issue notice and to deregister vehicles with advertising that has been found to be in breach of the relevant standards. We hope to introduce legislation by the end of the year, and between now and then operators should see the writing on the wall and get the writing off their vans.

Ms PEASE: Thank you very much, Minister. I really appreciate the effort you have put into this, because I know it touches the hearts of many parents and there has been a lot of media over that instance.

Mr WALKER: After 18 months of inaction.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, I refer to page 15 of the SDS in relation to youth conferencing. Youth conferencing obviously has broad community support. However, youth agencies in my area are frustrated because there is no funding to follow up a young person for further counselling or other support. I know that the department follows up but they are not youth counsellors. Would you consider funding youth agencies for this really important follow-up work, because some of them certainly in my electorate are crying out for further counselling but there is no funding for it?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. You go to an extremely important point, which is that you cannot address recidivism and you cannot address reoffending without having long-term support. It is not just what they do when they rock up to court and how we treat them when they are in youth detention and while they are on community orders, but what other support is there beyond that?

I can answer the member's question in this way. There are a number of initiatives beyond court ordered youth justice conferencing or police referred youth justice conferencing. There is Skilling Queenslanders for Work for one, and there is a particular program we have developed which is Youth Skills which is dedicated to kids in the youth justice system so that we can give them the training and skills they need to either get back into school, get into further training or get into employment. That is one initiative.

The other initiative which is operating in the western districts is Transition to Success. This is what the member is talking about. This is a program that started in the western districts and we are now rolling it out to other sites across Queensland with funding this year—\$5 million over the next two years. This is about wraparound support. This is working with NGOs, registered training organisations and youth justice workers and counsellors to support these young people to get into training and to follow them up. This is about longevity. This is about making sure that we are tracking not just what happens when they first come out, whether they are in a job or not, but what is happening six months and 12 months down the track.

In addition to that, we have an integrated case service where we are dealing one on one with families. This is being trialled in Caboolture at the moment with I think 10 families. This is one-on-one case management. Those are the sorts of initiatives. I will have to check whether Bundamba is one of the areas where we are operating, but it is early days. I am not going to sit here and pluck figures and say that this works. Transition to Success is getting very positive results in its early days. I consider this to be the start of the rollout. I see this as a potential program that has integrated support and long-term benefits across Queensland.

Mr WALKER: Mr Chair, I seek leave to table a graph with respect to the Toowoomba South election results. I have a copy for the Attorney-General and for Mr van der Merwe. Mr van der Merwe, could you take a little bit of time to look at the graph? While you are doing that, I will summarise where we got to in the last session, which was in relation to the introduction of full preferential voting. The Attorney's comments when she introduced the bill was that the reason for doing so was to reduce the informal vote. I go to your own comments, Mr van der Merwe: although you have taken the issue on notice, your view was that after an initial spike there would be a fall down towards an acceptable level of informal vote. The Attorney was crowing about the informal vote result in Toowoomba South on the weekend. The graph that I have provided you is from Mr Green from the ABC's analysis of the informal vote in Toowoomba South over the last 30 years. The red line is the federal result in Groom and the dark line is the Toowoomba South result. Mr van der Merwe, if we look at those two lines—

Mr BROWN: On a point of order, Mr Chair, this document is tabled without the author's name on it and there is no evidence provided by the member to say that it is from Antony Green. I request that he provide that evidence for the benefit of not only the members of the committee but also the Attorney-General.

Mr WALKER: Sure. Mr Chair, I identified as I tabled the document that it is from Mr Green's blog in relation to the Toowoomba South by-election result on Saturday night.

CHAIR: You did that.

Mr WALKER: Mr van der Merwe, there are two graphs there. Looking at the red line and the dark line, it is clear that, in general terms, since the early nineties, when optional preferential voting was introduced in Queensland, the level of informal vote in Toowoomba South has been significantly higher in the federal election than in the state election. Is that a fair statement?

Mr van der Merwe: That is what the graph represents. I agree with you.

Mr WALKER: How would you seek to explain the difference in those two lines? In your view, why is one higher than the other? You are an expert in analysing election results. Why would that be? Perhaps I could suggest to you that the significant factor is that one is done under compulsory preferential and the other is done under optional preferential. Would you accept that suggestion?

Mr van der Merwe: You are asking for analysis of this graph as I am sitting here at the moment. I feel it is a reasonably complex issue. To ensure that I provide you with a relevant, accurate and meaningful response, I will take it on notice please, if the Attorney is happy with that.

Mr WALKER: I think the Attorney has to accept that.

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to have that taken on notice.

Mr WALKER: Thank you, Attorney. I will look at a simpler question.

Mr BROWN: Point of order, Mr Chair, for the benefit of the commissioner also, Antony Green did say on that night that the lack of a Labor candidate in the by-election could also be a reason for the higher rate of informal vote.

Mr CRANDON: Where is the point of order on this, Chair? That is a debate.

CHAIR: Sorry, there is no relevance there.

Mr WALKER: As I said, this is a somewhat simpler question. Looking at the state line for the last 30 years, at what point do you detect the highest informal vote in Toowoomba South over the last 30 years?

Mr van der Merwe: At the by-election.

Mr WALKER: The highest informal vote in Toowoomba South has been at the last by-election. Do you interpret anything as a result of that with respect to the matters touching on compulsory or optional preferential voting?

Mr van der Merwe: There could be a number of things that result in that—

Mr WALKER: There could be, but what would your view be?

Mr van der Merwe: There is voter fatigue. We have—

Ms PEASE: Point of order, Mr Chair—

CHAIR: For the committee's benefit, can I ask what SDS page you are relying upon in respect of this line of questioning?

Mr CRANDON: You do not have to rely on SDS.

CHAIR: Yes, you do.

Mr CRANDON: No, you do not.

CHAIR: Yes, you do.

Mr WALKER: I am relying on the SDS. It is page 91, the eight per cent figure for level of informal voting. It is an analysis of how that figure is gained and Mr van der Merwe's earlier evidence that it relates to the introduction of compulsory preferential voting. The Toowoomba South election is a prime example of it. Getting this figure in comparison with that eight per cent figure is intimately linked to the SDS. Mr van der Merwe, do you have a simple view as to why the figure might have been higher last time?

Mr van der Merwe: There could be a number of issues, Mr Walker. Again, I would have to take it back and analyse it.

CHAIR: Mr van der Merwe, I will stop you there. It appears that the member is asking an opinion of you.

Mr van der Merwe: I am not giving an opinion.

CHAIR: I do not want you to give an opinion. I want you to try to answer it to the best of your ability.

Mr van der Merwe: Following on from what I have just said, there could be a number of issues but I am not prepared to say now unless I can back them up, so I will take that one on notice as well, Mr Walker.

Mr WALKER: Thanks. If I can go back to the Attorney. Mr Green was the author of that chart, and at the time you introduced the compulsory preferential voting he said that it was the 'political equivalent of bulldozing the Bellevue' in relation to the wanton damage to our electoral system. What is your reaction to that?

Mr BROWN: Again, point of order, Mr Chair. He is asking for an opinion.

Mr WALKER: What is the point of order?

CHAIR: Who is your question to, Mr Walker?

Mr WALKER: To the Attorney-General.

CHAIR: Can you repeat it, please?

Mr WALKER: Mr Green described the changes the Attorney made to our voting system as the 'political equivalent of bulldozing the Bellevue'. My question is: does the Attorney agree with that, particularly in light of the fact that the change did not go through the committee system, did not go through the community of Queensland and came into the parliament with 18 minutes notice?

Mrs D'ATH: No, I do not agree with that statement.

Mr WALKER: Can I go back to the Wicked Campers story, which conveniently appears today on the day of estimates after some period of inaction. The *Brisbane Times* quoted you in July last year, almost a year ago to the day, as saying that this matter was going to be looked at by the Law Reform Commission in due course. Has that occurred?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. What I actually stated in relation to the Law Reform Commission was not that the Law Reform Commission was doing a review on this. What I said was that the Law Reform Commission was considering doing a review in the Anti-Discrimination Act. The point I was making in that particular article and to the journalist was that anyone who is suggesting that this should form part of changes to the Anti-Discrimination Act could always have the opportunity to put those views forward as part of any broader review of the Anti-Discrimination Act. I have never stated the Anti-Discrimination Act was being specifically reviewed by the Queensland Law Reform Commission or any other body, including my department, for the purpose of this and this alone.

I have to say that I would have hoped the opposition would be very supportive of this. At the domestic violence event in the city earlier this year, the Leader of the Opposition gave me a commitment that I had the support of the opposition in the sense that there was no politics to be played here.

Mr WALKER: I assure the Attorney that there is no question of our support for doing something about this. Our point is why it has taken you so long to do something about this.

CHAIR: Member for Mansfield, you will allow the Attorney to answer the question.

Mrs D'ATH: The conversation between the then leader of the opposition and myself was that we are not going to play politics with this. It is an important issue that parties of all persuasions have really struggled to resolve. A criticism that we have taken 18 months on something that the opposition did not resolve in three years is a bit rich. The fact is that we have found a solution for it. That is a good thing and I would hope we have got bipartisan support in doing that, instead of criticising us on something no other government has been able to resolve. We have done it in 18 months. Halfway through our first term of government we have found a solution to this, and that is a good thing. That is a really good thing.

Mr WALKER: Attorney-General, the parliamentary committee that looked at this under our government in 2014 came up with a solution, to which this follows on. That was at the end of 2014. We are now in mid-2016. How do you justify that delay? You have not referred it to the Law Reform Commission, by the sounds of things. Where has this policy come from, other than the 2014 resolution of the parliament which set you in the direction at that point?

Mrs D'ATH: In fact the parliamentary committee did not recommend this as a solution to the problem. I think it was earlier in 2014 because I believe the then attorney-general made statements—and I stand to be corrected on whether it was in the parliament or it was outside the parliament—that the government of the day was considering the recommendations of the parliamentary committee, but the parliamentary committee went to a co-regulatory system. As the member would be aware, currently the Advertising Standards Bureau and board is self-regulated; it operates under a code. Noncompliance is about one per cent when it comes to decisions from the ASB. To co-regulate or regulate an entire sector because one per cent do not comply with those rulings has been a challenge, and I suspect that is why the previous government had not got to the point of figuring out what that co-regulatory system was.

I can say as the incoming Attorney-General that that body of work was not done. It was not like I walked into the job and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General handed me something and said, 'Here we go. Here's the draft legislation that the former attorney-general had ready to go. Will you progress it?' It did not exist. I am not criticising the former attorney-general; I am just saying that the work was not done.

The parliamentary committee handed down its report. I certainly have given a lot of consideration to, and my department has looked closely at, those recommendations, but I have also looked at what else we can do. Setting up a whole regulatory body comes at a cost. We all talk about red tape. Creating more bureaucracy and red tape for a sector where there is only one per cent noncompliance did not necessarily make sense, so I wanted to think outside the box and think what else we could do. Having sat down with Ms Jolly from the Advertising Standards Bureau and said, 'Where are the big problems here? Where are the gaps?', one of the gaps was commercial vehicles.

Mr WALKER: Can we go to that, Attorney-General? Your solution relates to commercial vehicles and to numberplates and registration here. I have seen a number of vehicles with interstate numberplates on the road. Can you guarantee that under your plan all Wicked Campers and similar vehicles will disappear from Queensland's roads?

Mrs D'ATH: No, I cannot guarantee that. We are trying to do everything we can as a state jurisdiction. I have been written to by federal colleagues who have had parliamentary inquiries on this as well. This has been a discussion across all jurisdictions, including the federal jurisdiction, which has looked at it and said, 'Is there something we can do at a federal level?' I can only control what is happening in the state jurisdiction in this area. We know that one of the noncomplying businesses in this area operates from two sites in Queensland. Does that mean that this business might seek to go across borders and get registered there? That supports why I intend to write to every one of my colleagues interstate to encourage them to do the same. I will also forward to my New Zealand colleagues what we are doing because I know they have managed to find some answers in relation to local government. They have now banned them from camping grounds, but they have not been able to tackle it more broadly.

I am not going to answer for the Department of Transport and Main Roads, but there are rules around registering vehicles in other states and when you need to transfer that registration over to the state you now operate out of. I will leave that and Minister Bailey might be able to answer those questions later in his estimates.

Mr WALKER: Thanks. I wish to go back to Mr van der Merwe and page 105 of the SDS which refers to the state referendum held this year in conjunction with the council election. I should interpose, Commissioner, that I was very glad to see you that day personally at one of our premier voting booths at Wishart State School. It was very good to see you hands-on on that day. Were you satisfied with the speed at which votes were counted and individual ballots declared as part of the joint process of administering the state referendum and the local government elections?

Mr van der Merwe: Thank you for the question. Yes, I was quite pleased with the speed. When Queensland went to the polls in March, I issued more than 9.3 million ballot papers. I have almost 3.1 million electors on the roll. As far as the local government goes, there was a ballot paper for a mayor, a ballot paper for a councillor and a ballot paper for the referendum, so it was a massive effort in terms of what we have done. It was the biggest electoral event in Queensland.

With regard to the counting, I gave no instructions to give the referendum preference over the local government. All the returning officers were told to do them in tandem. The referendum was a far easier count—it was yes or no—as opposed to the local government, where the voting systems are different for the mayor and the councillor, particularly if it is an undivided council or a divided council. In short, the answer to your question is, yes, I was very satisfied with the count.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. I will now go to the member for Capalaba.

Mr BROWN: Attorney, I turn your attention to page 12 of the SDS in relation to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In relation to investigations police may have undertaken or are undertaking, is it your role as the Attorney-General and first law officer to ask the department or the Office of the DPP to interfere in the findings of a police investigation?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question, and the answer is no. As the Attorney-General and as the first law officer, where the police undertake an investigation, it is not appropriate for me to ask the police in any way to release those investigations to me. The Queensland Police Service and their investigations are independent from my role as the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, as

they should be. Rightly, police investigations are a matter entirely for the police and are certainly not an area where government ministers should interfere or ask for explanations about which cases are pursued and why. I am aware of the shadow Attorney-General's remarks at a media conference about police investigations into a member of parliament that portray a remarkably different attitude. I have with me some of the member for Mansfield's remarks from that event, and I should point out this is not a private document. If you type 'Ian Walker' into Google, the very next words that appear are the transcript. His words were—

There is something strange about this, the people of Queensland deserve to know much more than they've been told and the Premier, the Attorney-General, the Commissioner of Police and somebody should be explaining to the people of Queensland why it is that this has come to an end after such a lengthy, protracted investigation.

The reporter goes on to ask—

Are you saying that the—yeah—that the government has instigated the police to do a cover-up?

Mr Walker responded—

What I am saying is that this government is committed to transparency.

The reporter went on—

Yeah, but you're saying that the police have covered it up.

Mr Walker responded—

And it deserves to tell the Queensland people better than simply nothing more is going—

Mr KRAUSE: A point of order on relevance. How does this question and point of view being put by the Attorney-General relate to the budget and to the SDS?

CHAIR: It is related to page 12 of the SDS and the Attorney is answering the member's question.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the chair. Going on, the reporter asks—

But that's the police side of things, it's not up to the government to release details of a police investigation, that never happens.'

Mr Walker—

It's up to the government to release a better explanation to the people of Queensland as to why this has come to a grinding halt. It's simply not good enough.

As members of the parliamentary press gallery were quick to point out, it indicates a lack of understanding about the separation of powers. The interview goes on—

So the executive should be able to tell them what do?

Mr Walker—

I'm not suggesting that the executive tell the police what to do.

Reporters—

'But you are, you are.'

Mr Walker goes on to state—

'I'm suggesting that the government explain to the people of Queensland how this process has ended up as it has today.'

The transcript states that the reporter asks—

'Which is the government telling the police what to do. That is literally what you are telling them to do.'

Mr Walker—

I'm not saying the government tell the police what to do, but how do you get what you want? The government needs to explain how the process has got us to this point where we are.

Reporter—

But the government left the process to the police.

To the member's question, this is an extremely serious matter. To call on the Attorney-General to ask the police about an investigation in which they have made a finding is ignoring the importance of separation of powers and asking me to interfere in that process. Obviously one of my responsibilities is the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions—and it makes decisions about whether or not it progresses prosecutions in relation to investigations—but it is not appropriate for me as the Attorney-General to ask the police to divulge their investigations to me, as suggested by the shadow Attorney-General.

Mr BROWN: For the member for Beaudesert's benefit, I refer to page 12 of the SDS which refers to the role of the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions. Will the Attorney-General explain why this investigation would come under the auspices of the police and not the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions?

Mrs D'ATH: As I stated earlier, it would be completely inappropriate for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to require the QPS to justify their inquiries. I am uncertain why the opposition would call on the government to release this information. I understand why the opposition did this—for the politics of it—but it was an extraordinary call by the LNP. It is very important to understand the separation of powers and the role that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and I play in relation to any investigations. I would not and should not interfere in those direct investigations by the Queensland Police Service.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. I think we have heard the answers to the questions.

Ms PEASE: I refer to page six of the SDS regarding the reintroduction of specialist courts. Will the Attorney update the committee on the re-establishment of the Murri Court?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. Certainly one of the government's election commitments was to reinstate our diversionary courts and in doing so ensure that our courts have the tools at hand to consider what sort of sentencing should be issued in relation to offenders who appear before the court. The Murri Court was operating when Labor was last in government, but when the LNP came in they sought to shut down our diversionary courts, including the Murri Court.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for three per cent of the Australian population but, in terms of the prison population in Queensland, equate to 32 per cent of adults and 64 per cent of juveniles. The government has committed \$8.7 million over four years from 2015-16 to reinstate specialist courts such as the Murri Court along with the diversion Special Circumstance Court, the Drug Court—which was abolished by the previous government—and of course court ordered youth justice conferencing. The Murri Court is being re-established in 13 locations across Queensland. The formal launch ceremonies have already occurred in Rockhampton, Cairns, Townsville, Brisbane, Richlands, Mackay, Mt Isa, Cherbourg and Wynnum. The remaining launches in Cleveland, St George, Toowoomba and Caboolture will be held by the end of this year.

I should state that the Murri Court is not a soft option. The Murri Court requires offenders to work hard to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour. Offenders are shamed before elders, required to take responsibility for their offending and to recognise the impact of their actions on the community. The new Murri Court model is one initiative that contributes to reducing the contact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the traditional justice system, instils trust in the justice system—which is extremely important for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—and contributes to a fair, safe and just Queensland. The Murri Court provides an opportunity for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including elders and victims, to participate in a court process which requires defendants to take responsibility for their offending behaviour and which respects and acknowledges their cultures. Defendants are provided with support from elders and support services to address the underlying causes of their offending behaviour.

I advise that under the new model we aim to ensure that community participation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the local community when sentencing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will ensure that it is a culturally appropriate process that respects and acknowledges the rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Referrals to support services help court users address the underlying contributors to their offending behaviour and improve sentencing outcomes by providing the judiciary with information regarding each client's cultural and personal circumstances. I go to the point that the member for Bundamba raised before, namely, it is about ensuring those services are in the community. Honestly, when one talks about criminal justice, it cannot be about just what is happening in my area: it must be a whole-of-government strategy looking at what the departments of communities, police and mental health are doing. There are so many elements to this to really ensure that we have not just the programs but the organisations to provide this support in the community.

I acknowledge the elders and the respected persons, because they have been very supportive in re-establishing the Murri Court. They will receive a daily attendance allowance of \$100 to recognise their valuable contribution to the Murri Court. I also acknowledge the community justice groups across the state.

Ms PEASE: Thank you, Minister. Yes, I was delighted that the Murri Court in Wynnum has just been reinstated, that I was able to attend and that it was so well received by the elders and respected persons. I refer to page 12 and 13 of the SDS regarding the work of the Strategic Policy and Legal Services Unit. Can the Attorney outline what reforms have been instigated to provide fairness for LGBTI Queenslanders?

Mrs D'ATH: Again, I know that this is an issue about which the member and many government and opposition members are passionate. I am very pleased that, when it comes to initiatives of this government, we are committed to ensuring fairness and equality for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex community. I am pleased to be responsible for delivering a number of those reforms within my portfolio, the first being the gay panic defence. Where a defendant has killed with murderous intent, the successful application of the partial defence of provocation under section 304 of the Queensland Criminal Code reduces the criminal responsibility of the defendant to manslaughter. This means the defendant avoids the punishment of mandatory life imprisonment for murder. The government is committed to amending section 304 to exclude an unwanted sexual advance from being able to establish a partial defence of provocation. In effect, we will ensure that the gay panic defence cannot be relied upon in Queensland in the case of murder.

I have consulted with legal stakeholders on draft amendments to section 304 and thank the legal stakeholders for their considered feedback. I anticipate introducing amending legislation later this year. Consensual anal sex between adults was decriminalised in Queensland in 1991 in recognition that this type of private consensual activity is not a matter of concern for our criminal justice system, nor should it be. In terms of expunging historical convictions, as the member would be aware, I have referred this to the Queensland Law Reform Commission. The Queensland Law Reform Commission is to report back to me on 31 August. Currently, the legal position in Queensland is complicated and it is not possible to simply delete the reference to a particular offence from the criminal records of predominantly homosexual men in relation to those previous charges. As I said before, it will take some time to work through what that model should look like; but I want to be clear that the referral to the Queensland Law Reform Commission was not, 'Should we do this?' It was, 'How should we do this?'

One of the other initiatives is the civil partnerships ceremony about which I am very pleased. The legislation commenced on 22 March this year and delivers on the government's commitment to reinstating civil partnerships. Of course, those are just some of the initiatives that this government has introduced and are ones of which I am very proud to ensure equity across our community.

CHAIR: I refer to page 16 of the SDS in respect of the government's policy on tackling alcohol-fuelled violence. Can you outline for the committee's benefit the package of reforms to create a safe and vibrant night life across Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: As the member knows, on coming into government this government committed to tackling alcohol-fuelled violence in our community. In doing so, we know that over the years there has been a range of initiatives proposed and implemented in this area. But one area not being tackled related to the hours of service of alcohol. The evidence shows that, for every hour that we reduce alcohol service, we see a significant reduction in assaults. In relation to Newcastle, the Sydney CBD and Kings Cross, there were significant reductions in the numbers of those offences.

I should say that it is not just assaults but also sexual assaults. Importantly, it is also assaults against our police, against our paramedics and against our nurses and doctors who work in our emergency departments in the early hours of the morning. Of course, there is also the flow-on effect of the impact on our health system more broadly, as we heard from Dr Anthony Lynham many times in his public statements, which is our specialist surgeons who are no longer doing the reconstructive surgery that they trained to do. Instead, they are just putting people's faces back together after big nights out as a consequence of alcohol fuelled violence in our communities. We know that the majority of Queenslanders believe that action needs to be taken, and that is what we have done.

Our suite of legislation and changes reduces liquor service hours in Safe Night Out precincts to 3 am, with a grace period of half an hour to consume those drinks, and in our suburbs it is 2 am, with a half-an-hour grace period. We have also brought in a ban at midnight for high-alcohol, rapid consumption drinks and we are looking at extending banning orders to drug offences. I am happy to finish it there.

CHAIR: I will now go to the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: I would like to address my set of questions to Mr MacSporran, if I may, from the CCC. Good morning, Mr MacSporran. If I can take you to page 54 of the SDS in relation to staffing, can I ask you how many staff within your organisation are dedicated to crime fighting and how many are dedicated to anticorruption?

Mr MacSporran: If you can just bear with me for one moment I will turn up the section. We have police as well as civilian investigators and other investigators in each of those sections. There is a division. There are 79 police who are seconded to the commission separately. A largish proportion of those work in the Crime section. I am just looking for the actual staffing figures, if you can bear with me.

Mr WALKER: Mr MacSporran, perhaps the Attorney will be happy to come back to us with that precise breakup as a question on notice.

Mr MacSporran: Yes, we can get you those figures at short notice. I do not have them in front of me at the moment—the breakdown.

Mr WALKER: Where I am leading to is—

Mrs D'ATH: Member for Mansfield, if we are going to take it on notice, even for a short period of time potentially, can we just get the question again, please?

Mr WALKER: How many staff are dedicated to crime fighting and how many towards anticorruption? Mr MacSporran, are you able to tell me whether the mix or ratio in that regard has changed in the last year compared to the coming year that we are looking at?

Mr MacSporran: I do not think it has changed in any material way. There is always the need to be flexible and agile with the staffing overall. In particular, since I have been there I have promoted a culture of just that. When you come to the CCC, no matter if you are a seconded police officer, you do not come to Crime or Corruption; you come to the CCC and you are then required to be deployed wherever the need arises. To that extent, the staffing model is reasonably flexible. There are some specialist positions that cannot easily be rotated in that fashion, but certainly investigator positions can be done in that way. There has not been a massive change over time, but there is the ability to meet the need as it arises.

Mr WALKER: Commissioner, you made some statements in relation to the politicisation of referrals to the CCC, particularly during election campaigns, prior to the local government elections. You actually released a joint statement with the LGAQ. What led you to be concerned about that and to take that step?

Mr MacSporran: I think there has been a history over a number of elections, state and local government—and even federal for that matter, although it is outside our jurisdiction—where in the election period, after the election is called and before polling day, there is publicising of the fact that allegations of corruption have come to us. That often places us in a very difficult position. We would like to have time and to preserve the integrity of the investigation process not to have it publicised. It is often done with an ulterior motive of political advantage or to cause detriment to the political opponent. It can do irreparable damage to reputations and it is simply unfair.

In conjunction with the LGAQ we made a concerted effort jointly to send the message that the CCC was the place to bring such allegations, that we were interested in them and we take them seriously, but please do it confidentially. One of the real concerns we have, apart from the reputational damage and the unfairness of it, is that if there is a publicising of the fact there is an allegation before we become involved it can often materially affect the integrity of our investigation process. Documents can be destroyed, evidence can be interfered with and witnesses can be approached and prevailed upon. By the time we get there, often there is nothing to see—not because there is no corruption but because it has been covered up. It is for all those reasons that it is undesirable.

We have recently, as you would have seen, issued a discussion paper inviting submissions from all interested stakeholders—including political parties, the media and so forth—as to whether it is in the public interest to publicise such allegations that come to us. We are proposing to hold a public forum where I will sit as part of a panel in public to hear various stakeholders articulate their concerns with a view to providing some sort of report to the government to try to provide some solutions to what is clearly a very complex and difficult problem.

Mr WALKER: Commissioner, I take you to page 51 of the SDS, which relates to responding to the Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry and the report of the Taskforce on Organised Crime Legislation. In broad terms, what does that response entail for your organisation?

Mr MacSporran: I think it is fair to say that it is reasonably positive. We made detailed submissions on a number of occasions to the inquiry. I think most of those or all of those have now been published on our website, so they are now a matter of public record. Generally speaking, the initiatives that came out of that are reasonably positive for us. In particular, we made the point that we needed to have a broader ability—a funded ability—to attack in particular criminal paedophilia, because it is a shocking problem that faces us and the community, particularly children around the world but certainly in Queensland. We sought to have a further emphasis placed upon that.

As you would have seen, the government provided the remaining funds from the commission of inquiry itself. The leftover funds that were not expended went to the Police Service with a view to the Police Service and the CCC conducting a blitz on criminal paedophilia. Out of that we received, by negotiation—a very amicable, consensual process with the QPS—the sum of \$485,000 to fund our forensic computing unit further, to staff it further and to build up its resources and equipment. We got permission from the Attorney to access a further \$510,000 from our retained earnings to facilitate the purchase of a second server to our forensic computing unit. With those funds, which will see us through until the end of this financial year, we have been able to attack that problem in a more concentrated way. That is one aspect. There are others, as you know.

The crime hearings, the intel hearings, are having a broader focus than the outlaw motorcycle gangs, which were the focus of other funding earlier. We have got a further \$3.6 million over four years for that initiative. That is proving a very valuable initiative in the field currently of cold-call investment fraud to put together a package to protect the community and run a crime prevention initiative, because it is not sustainable to continue to investigate fully and charge all of these people in the hope you will shut them down. It is another positive initiative and there are others, as you see.

Mr WALKER: Can I take you to the Taskforce on Organised Crime Legislation and your submission to that task force in December last year. In it you said—

It is clear from the recent developments that several clubs—
meaning outlaw motorcycle gangs—

(including three of the major clubs) have been actively recruiting new members on the Gold Coast. The timing of the recruitment activities suggests that, following the change of government in January 2015, it is perceived by clubs that there is a softening of the stance against OMCG activity.

Commissioner, what led you to that conclusion?

Mr MacSporran: As we said in our advice, our report to the task force, which again is now public, was from our intelligence sources. Intelligence is not evidence. It is not guesswork, but it is the best information we can put together to paint a picture. It is not just our intelligence; we have a collaborative effort with other law enforcement agencies all around Australia including the federal agencies. Our intel provided just that information: it looked to us as though there was an attempt to recruit and re-form groups on the Gold Coast in particular. It was somewhat speculative to provide a reason for that. One possible reason was, as we saw in the media, a suggestion that there might have been, with the change of government, a lessening of the laws or a repeal of those laws which had been operating for some time before that. There was no intel to that effect, I should make clear. That was, rather, a conclusion that might reasonably be drawn by some.

What I can say to update the information is that that is currently still the belief. The intel is telling us that. I can make it very clear that we have not lost visibility of those groups. In fact, because we have access to intel more recently and are aware of the current trends—we have absolute visibility—we have several operations that are ongoing in terms of the involvement of those groups in drug trafficking, weapons trading and the like. Those are ongoing investigations. If there is a need to use our powers, in particular our intel powers, in an ongoing way, we have the ability to do that, even though our current funding is to be used for initiatives outside the bikie initiative. Quite coincidentally, our work in the cold-call investment fraud area, with that funding outside the bikie group funding, has revealed a connection between cold-call investment fraud and the bikie groups. As I say, we have not lost sight of them.

Mr WALKER: Commissioner, as it has turned out, the apprehension of the laws being repealed has turned out to be true: the laws are going to be repealed. Do you have any concerns with that potential repeal, as flagged by the government, particularly given your comment that that is still the perception of outlaw motorcycle gangs? Perception or reality, what does it mean to those gangs?

CHAIR: Member for Mansfield, you are asking for an opinion there. I will ask you to either rephrase it or go to the next question.

Mr WALKER: I would ask the commissioner, who has intelligence about these matters to which he was just speaking, as to what that intelligence would have him come to the conclusion of with respect to the question that I asked regarding the repeal of the laws?

Mr MacSporrán: As I said, there is no intelligence that would enable us to draw conclusions sensibly about the reason for what looks like an initiative to recruit and re-form. As I said, we have not lost sight of it. As to what the new laws will allow us to do by way of enforcement and investigation in that space, that remains to be seen. All I can say to reassure the committee and the public of Queensland is that, whatever those laws are, we are bound to enforce them. If there is ultimately a difficulty in controlling any part of organised crime, including the outlaw motorcycle gangs, with those powers or lack of them if that is the perception or the reality, we would be the first to make that known to the Attorney and more generally to our oversight committee. It is not as though we are going to be stuck with something, as it were, that does not work. If there is ultimately a concern based on evidence that there is a gap in the legislation that constrains our powers to properly deal with those groups or any group in the organised crime space, we would be able to and very ready to express that view so that it can be addressed in whatever way the government considers appropriate.

CHAIR: It being close enough to the committee's time to break for lunch, the committee will adjourn.

Mrs D'ATH: Chair, if I may before we break, I did not get the chance in my previous session, but I know our statutory bodies will be leaving us after this session. I want to take the opportunity to put on record my thanks to all of them and their staff for the great work and the tireless work that they do on behalf of government and in the community. I say thank you to those statutory bodies.

Before we break, can I note a correction to my opening statement. I stated in relation to the Southport domestic and family violence court evaluation that there was \$13.6 million over four years to roll out the specialist DV courts to a number of other locations. In fact the figure is not \$13.6 million; it is actually \$26.8 million that is allocated. I just wanted to correct the record.

Mr MacSporrán: Mr Chair, with your leave, I can give you the breakdown of those figures now if that is convenient.

CHAIR: We might do it when we come back if that is okay. The committee will now adjourn for lunch and will recommence within 30 minutes.

Proceedings suspended from 12.15 pm to 12.48 pm



CHAIR: The estimates hearing of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is now resumed. We will now consider the proposed expenditure in the Justice and Attorney-General portfolio area.

Mrs D'ATH: As we move into the next session, I advise that I have the breakdown in relation to the question taken on notice from the member for Mansfield to the chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission regarding crime and corruption staff. I table that for the benefit of the committee.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, I refer to page 16 of the JAG SDS with respect to liquor and gaming and the policy the government introduced with respect to alcohol fuelled violence which began 1 July, including reduction of trading hours, and the lockouts which are due to commence in February next year. Recently in the paper there has been some confusion with respect to this policy because, Attorney, you have issued joint press releases with Dr Anthony Lynham on occasion and with the Premier. Dr Lynham has been at press conferences and you have received advice from him with respect to his expertise in this matter, yet Dr Lynham is quoted in a newspaper article by John McCarthy on 9 June which states—

At his timeworn offices in Mary Street he leans across the table and says: "I've got a scoop for you. Lockout laws don't work." Attorney, if Dr Lynham is now saying that lockout laws do not work, why are lockout laws part of your alcohol fuelled violence strategy?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. When you read the whole article you will see that the rest of the quote from Dr Lynham is that lockout laws on their own do not work. I have spoken to Minister Lynham, who has clearly stated that his comment was that lockout laws do not work 'on their own'. I note that those words were not used in the quote, but in fact both Dr Lynham and I and the government as a whole have been making that point in relation to the package of initiatives in relation to tackling alcohol fuelled violence. That measure on its own will not necessarily result in a reduction in alcohol fuelled violence, but coupled with a range of other initiatives—most importantly the reduction in service hours—it can make a difference.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, with respect to Dr Lynham's comments, I note that he made those comments in the newspaper article with a 'scoop', as he says. If he was wrong, he has not publicly advised what he meant nor clarified in what context you should take that quote, because he simply said, 'Lockout laws don't work.' Your lockout laws do not come into effect until February next year. Your other laws are already applicable, so why are you proceeding with lockout laws? In isolation they do not work. Dr Lynham said they do not work anyway. Why are you even proceeding with them?

Mrs D'ATH: In fact they are not operating in isolation. If that was the only thing we were bringing in and if we had brought that in first and the other initiatives later, that would not have made sense because, as we have said, the evidence points to the fact that the reduction in service of alcohol hours is the main contributor to the reduction in assaults. That is what the evidence is, both interstate and internationally as well. That is the primary initiative, and that is the one that has come into effect on 1 July this year.

1 February next year is when the option of lockout laws applies, and the reason there is a delay is twofold (1) to ensure that venues, safe-night-out precincts and boards have the opportunity to consider if they want to take up that option, because of course it is an option to choose that as opposed to 2 am last drinks; and (2) it will also give us the opportunity to measure the two, which is something that other jurisdictions have not done and we will be able to do for the first time. What we will be able to see over the first six months as the evaluation occurs—and we have committed to an extensive independent evaluation of these initiatives—is what impact has the first set of initiatives, reducing service hours and banning high-alcohol rapid-consumption drinks, had on assaults and then, when you bring in the lockout, how much of a difference or what difference has that made on top of those initiatives. We will get a clear picture of the impacts of those different initiatives because we are bringing them in at different times.

Mr BLEIJIE: Is Dr Lynham wrong and he has been taken out of context, or is the journalist wrong?

CHAIR: I do not think the Attorney is in a position to question what Dr Lynham has said in this regard, so I will have you move on to your next question if you have something that is relevant.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is very relevant with respect to page 16 of the SDS, alcohol fuelled violence strategy. The Attorney commented to this committee that she spoke to Dr Lynham following the comments that he made.

Attorney, you have just indicated he said that in isolation they do not work, but that is not what he is quoted as saying in the paper and nothing has been said to clarify his comments publicly. Have you asked Dr Lynham to clarify his statements publicly? Is it still the intention of the government to introduce lockout laws in February next year despite Dr Lynham saying they do not work?

Mrs D'ATH: Those questions should be put to Dr Lynham. Obviously they are not within his portfolio responsibility, but the opposition is welcome to ask those questions of him in other arenas. The reality is that I am not going to speak for Dr Lynham; I am going to speak for the government as a whole. The statement over a long period of time from Dr Lynham, the government and me is that it is a package. Lockout laws on their own would not reduce assaults to the extent that we have seen interstate; it has to form part of a range of initiatives. We have made the point that the reduction in service of alcohol hours is the most important initiative here.

It is not a question of comparing Dr Lynham's comments to my comments. The fact is that Dr Lynham and I have stood by this initiative and these packages along with many other stakeholders. The Queensland Tourism Industry Council, AMA, FARE, Healthy Options Australia, Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, Salvation Army, Lives Lived Well, QNU, QNADA, Public Health Association of Australia, Clubs Queensland and the National Alliance for Action on Alcohol have all said the same thing. The police union and the Police Service have all said the same thing: it is a package of measures.

With regard to your question about whether we still intend to bring this in, the legislation has said that, come 1 February, safe night out boards will have the option to select 3 am last drinks with a 1 am lockout; alternatively, if they do not choose that option they will revert to a 2 am last drinks. That option is in the legislation; that option remains.

Mr BLEIJIE: In her estimates earlier in the week the Premier was quite certain that lockouts remain government strategy. It seems that the government cherry pick Dr Lynham when they want to. When they want his support they have him in press releases and press conferences, but when he says

something you are not entirely happy with or he has gone against what you have introduced, you distance yourselves from him and say, 'Ask Dr Lynham.' You are the minister for this policy who, on your own admission, has relied on Dr Lynham's advice in developing this policy.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. I have relied on a significant amount of evidence which has been put together by a range of stakeholders in relation to this initiative. I am answering the questions as the relevant minister who introduced these laws. This is not an estimates hearing about Dr Lynham; this is an estimates hearing about tackling alcohol fuelled violence initiatives and how they appear in the budget papers. I am more than happy to answer any questions about the evidence-based approach we have taken in introducing these laws and why they are important. We stand by what we have introduced in legislation, which is that the option of going to a 1 am lockout with 3 am last drinks will come in on 1 February for safe-night-out precincts.

Mr BLEIJIE: I have a question for the Director-General of the department or he may wish to refer it to the Deputy Director-General, Mr Ford, with respect to gaming policy. Director-General, with respect to SDS 16, liquor and gaming regulation, is it the case that under the new laws a community club will stop serving alcohol, for example, at 2 am but then can apply for a gaming licence for two hours after they close at 2 am? Is that your understanding?

Mr Mackie: I thank the member for the question. The gaming side of it is separate to the alcohol side of it, so I am happy for the Commissioner for Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading to answer that question.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Ford, with respect to what I was asking the Director-General with respect to the government's legislation that went through the parliament, my understanding is that it decoupled liquor and gaming licence applications; is that correct?

Mr Ford: That is correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: On that basis, if we have a community club in a suburb, for instance—it may not necessarily be in a safe-night precinct—that stops serving alcohol at 2 am, can they apply for a gaming permit for the two hours after they cease trading liquor?

Mr Ford: Yes, they can.

Mr BLEIJIE: Mr Ford, on that basis with the decoupling, the community clubs, as you have just said, can apply for a two-hour gaming permit. Does that include Keno?

Mr Ford: No, it does not.

Mr BLEIJIE: Why not?

Mr Ford: Keno is still tied to the liquor hours that they have, so the service of Keno products would finish normally with the end of the grace period post the end of trading which would be, in the case of these clubs, 2.30.

Mr BLEIJIE: For the committee's reference, Keno is a game in many community clubs across Queensland and, compared to poker machines, Keno would be in the soft category, would it?

Mr Ford: Keno is generally not perceived as being a high-risk game for those who are likely to develop gambling problems; that is correct.

Mr BLEIJIE: How is it with the legislation we allow community clubs to apply for extended trading hours for poker machines and yet Keno has not been tied into that? Is it because the Keno Act was not amended at the same time as the Gaming Machine Act?

Mr Ford: My understanding, Mr Bleijie, is that it is not necessary to amend the Keno Act. It would be necessary to amend the regulations that sit around the Keno Act.

Mr BLEIJIE: Have those regulations been amended yet?

Mr Ford: At this point those regulations have not been amended.

Mr BLEIJIE: Have not been amended?

Mr Ford: Have not been amended.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, is it the case that it was a deliberate strategy of the government to forget Keno with this policy, or is it just another one of your bumbles and you forgot about it?

CHAIR: That question is out of order given the imputations in it.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney-General, how is it that Keno seems to have missed the policy in terms of regulatory policy with respect to that extra two-hour trading?

Mrs D'ATH: Keno has been treated differently in the past. It is an issue that we are looking at the moment because there is a discrepancy as to gaming generally in those clubs and Keno. I am certainly turning my mind to the fact that I have no objection to Keno having the same trading hours as gaming generally. As I say, we are looking at that at the moment as to whether that regulation needs to be extended.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, I put it to you that it is not necessarily a discrepancy but you just did not do it. Something happened. Why was Keno not included in that? Is it that just now because it has been brought to your attention you are going to look at it? How did your office and your department not have Keno included in that? If community clubs and pubs can apply for a two-hour gaming permit afterwards, I would have thought it was pretty easy to say that Keno would have been included at the start.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. With regard to the advice I received in relation to any adjustments and amendments to legislation, this particular regulation was not brought to my attention. As I say, it has since been and Keno stakeholders have been meeting with the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation on this matter and we are currently looking at the issue.

Mr BLEIJIE: So it is not your fault? You are blaming the department, as you just did?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I am saying that it did not form part of the advice as to what legislation needed to be amended. It was not a deliberate exclusion. I can advise that it was not a deliberate exclusion, to leave Keno out. It just was not put forward as far as the drafting instructions as to what we needed to change.

Mr BLEIJIE: But, Attorney, this was your big, comprehensive alcohol fuelled violence strategy. This was communicated and consulted with the community. I take your point that it was not deliberately not included, which goes to my earlier point: it appears it was just forgotten or someone did not know that it should have been. It really surprises me that you did not get advice to say that Keno should be included in the gaming provisions for the extension and now you are having to rush and fix up a mistake that was made.

Mrs D'ATH: As the member states, this was a comprehensive strategy. This was one element in that strategy in relation to the decoupling. The core objective of course had to do with the liquor service hours that we were bringing in and how we decoupled that with gaming. As I say, the regulations in relation to Keno were not put forward as part of one of those amendments that should be made to ensure that we have that decoupling and that opportunity and it was not a deliberate decision to leave Keno out.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, it is a bungle.

Mrs D'ATH: I have made that clear and the answer is very clear.

Mr BLEIJIE: It is a bungle.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. We will go to the member for Capalaba.

Mr BROWN: Attorney, I refer to page 5 of the SDS regarding the operation of Queensland's courts. Can the Attorney please outline if there are any ongoing costs incurred by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General through the outsourcing of the former State Reporting Bureau?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. As is widely known, the reporting in our courts was outsourced by the previous government in March 2013. The former government outsourced the recording and transcription of the Queensland courts and tribunals to Auscript. The outsourced arrangement to Auscript replaced the previous services provided by the State Reporting Bureau at a cost of more than \$12.2 million annually. It was originally estimated by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General that expenditure on the outsourced model would be between \$6 million and \$8 million, which would result in savings to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General of between \$4 million and \$6 million.

During 2015 the Queensland Audit Office conducted an audit to determine whether the expected benefits from outsourcing were being realised and whether the department was managing the contract effectively. The Queensland Audit Office report indicated that the average expenditure in 2013-14 and the 2014-15 year was \$9.7 million. In 2015-16 the transcript and recording costs for JAG were \$9.4 million. Based on the anticipated savings of \$6 million, which were harvested by the previous government, and the actual cost in 2015-16 of \$9.4 million, the outsourcing arrangement is in fact costing \$3 million more than anticipated. In addition, a loss of approximately \$1 million revenue from the sale of transcripts occurred.

It should be noted that current expenditure includes not only payments to the current service provider, Auscript, but also Department of Justice and Attorney-General costs associated with the dedicated transcript coordination team required as a result of the ongoing challenges of the outsourcing arrangement. This does not include non-quantifiable costs such as other court staff having to be involved in the recording and transcription process such as associates having to ensure recording equipment is working. The verification of the billing data by the department identified in the Queensland Audit Office report remains an ongoing manual process undertaken by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, with inaccurate invoices requiring action by Auscript each invoicing period.

I can advise that the Court of Appeal division of the Supreme Court's annual report 2014-15, while acknowledging that the quality and turnaround times had improved, highlighted issues being experienced regarding accuracy, timeliness of transcript production and the impact on the timely delivery of judgements and listing of matters. The department raises performance concerns with Auscript as events occur and at monthly operational meetings.

What is concerning and the lessons learned from all of this is making sure that there are proper procurement processes within departments when these sorts of decisions are made. The audit report is quite scathing in relation to how this occurred. The Audit Office made it clear in their conclusions that—

The model is delivering lower annual net operating costs to the state, but these fall well short of the up to \$6 million in savings originally estimated. The savings realised by the state have also come at a cost to court users in terms of the prices they pay for their transcripts and the levels of service they receive.

The report goes on to state—

In its endeavour to save money DJAG—

the Department of Justice and Attorney-General—

failed to adequately consider and assess the likely impact of its decisions on the courts and court users.

In making that decision it talks about outsourcing public services, and page 3 of the report states—

The former attorney-general made the decision to outsource to a single provider and set the timeframes for this to occur. The procurement timeframes were clearly driven by the need to achieve budget savings through staff redundancies by 30 June 2013. We saw no documented analysis supporting the rationale for a single provider model.

It is a lesson to be learned where directions are given by ministers to departments to do things and to do things quickly for the purposes of saving money without due consideration. We are talking about a significant outsourcing to a single provider and very limited time to actually see through that work in making sure there were savings being made and, importantly, considering the cost implications for consumers—the users at the end of the day, those who are accessing the courts—and making sure the contractual arrangements were done properly. For example, the free transcripts that are provided to certain individuals and certain users were not transferred over to Auscript, so the department has had to fund that internally, even though we outsourced the Auscript service.

Mrs MILLER: Minister, I refer to pages 14 and 15 of the SDS in relation to youth justice, particularly in relation to the youth offender support program funding. Minister, if a community youth organisation is to be re-funded for another year, can you ensure the organisation is advised at the earliest possible opportunity? The reason I ask this is that youth justice workers in the Goodna area and in my community are highly sought after by other youth organisations, as you can imagine, because they deal with youth who have very high challenges. What happens is: in the previous year, when they know the funding is going to run out, they often get cherrypicked by other youth organisations when they would rather stay with us in our community and then we have to hire and retrain other people. That causes a churn through our community organisations. I am just wondering if you would consider that, even if it looks likely they are going to be funded, they can get that assurance earlier rather than later.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question, because this is certainly a challenge for governments. When I was a backbencher federally I used to be frustrated by community organisations coming to me saying, 'Our funding runs out in a month's time. We don't know whether it's being re-funded,' and I asked the same question of ministers myself. I certainly understand the importance of trying to give certainty to organisations. Whether it is community organisations through my training space, for example, or training organisations, whether it is community legal centres or whether it is youth organisations, it is important to try to provide that certainty. The challenge for ministers is when we can provide that certainty when it is all subject to budgets and getting approval in the budget for that funding.

One of the ways to deal with that—and I know in the training space we are looking at this as well—is, where we can, we will look at funding to be beyond annual and potentially be triennial funding to give certainty for the next three years. We know what that means for an organisation, and keeping that expertise is critical. If they think the funding is going to be running out in a month's time, yes, they are going to start looking for work elsewhere because they have bills to pay. It is a challenge for every government agency and every minister. It is one that I am extremely mindful of and I am looking at. Where we can across all of my portfolio responsibilities and where it is appropriate and where we are confident that they can provide properly on that—and CLCs are one good example in that it is triennial funding—we should do so. I certainly take your issue on board and, as I say, I am going through that process anyway so we can provide certainty to groups in the future. It might not happen to every lot of funding and every program, but certainly where I can—

Mrs MILLER: I am only particularly interested in those specialist youth officers, because it is causing issues in my local community. When we take a good youth officer out, or they leave, we find it very difficult to recruit to come into the Goodna area for a start. We could have six months where we do not have that availability there to be able to offer the services.

Mrs D'ATH: We know a lot of problems across all levels of government are not necessarily recurrent. Consequently, the end result would be whether I can convince the Treasurer to give me two or three years of funding into the future for these programs. It is certainly a point that I take on board and I thank the member for the question.

Mr BROWN: I would like to turn your attention to page 12 of the SDS regarding the Strategic Policy and Legal Services unit. Can you please explain the reforms to the court sentencing submissions and procedures stemming from the Barbaro decision?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. These court reforms are really important. It is important that governments get the opportunity when there is a practice or a precedent that exists for many years in the legal system and there is a court decision that comes down that alters that status quo and the legal profession believes that that decision should be rectified through policy and legislative changes, to consider feedback from relevant stakeholders. Barbaro is certainly one of those cases. The reform that we undertook last year did not necessarily receive attention, of course, but it was an important issue for the legal profession and to the courts and one that I had had many approaches on.

Members will remember that we passed amendments to improve the consistency of sentencing and the efficiency of Queensland courts. The laws reinstate the ability of a court to receive submissions from both prosecution and defence on the appropriate sentence, or the bounds of the range of appropriate sentences that should be imposed. As a government, we listened to the concerns of the legal profession and the judiciary and we delivered the legislative reform to return sentencing procedures to those in place in Queensland prior to the 2014 High Court decision in Barbaro.

This was a good development, not just for the legal profession which practise in the field but also for the courts more broadly. It allows for better and more fulsome submissions to be made on sentencing. We know that sentencing is an important issue and one that the community is particularly interested in. It reflects the significant contribution that should rightly be made to the sentencing process by lawyers on both sides of the bar table. It should also assist in consistency in sentencing as well as assist in the efficient running of courtrooms across Queensland.

I will leave it at that for the moment, member. Certainly, the act commenced on 5 May 2016 and it has been welcomed, as I say, not just by the legal profession which appear at the bar but also by the courts themselves.

CHAIR: I go to page 14 in the SDS in regard to the Palaszczuk government's youth justice initiatives. I ask you to outline for the benefit of the committee the evidence based youth justice system.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. At the 2015 election, the government committed to reinstating the capacity for courts to refer young offenders to youth justice conferencing. In 2015-16, \$23.6 million was allocated over four years to give effect to this commitment, the primary focus being to ensure that this reinstatement would provide enhanced restorative justice opportunities that are aligned with contemporary best practice evidence and youth justice strategic priorities and to provide a more robust evaluation framework.

The funding allows for 62 new temporary full-time equivalent positions to resource and administer the program over the remaining three years of the project. In April 2016, the government introduced into parliament the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016. This legislation has both enhanced and reinstated the pathways for the court to refer matters to conferences and provided greater flexibility to deliver diversionary restorative justice interventions.

We know that this is welcomed across the profession. Anyone who works in youth justice had been calling out for this. We had police referrals but, when they lost the court ordered youth justice conferencing, we saw a decline in the number of conferences. As we know, youth justice conferencing is not just beneficial for trying to deal with the offender but it is certainly seen as a better way to get good outcomes for the victims, because they get the opportunity to front the offender directly.

CHAIR: You have explained some of the initiatives in your answer. I ask you to outline the benefits of the Transition to Success program and its cost in comparison with the boot camps, please?

Mrs D'ATH: Sure. The Transition to Success program is a youth justice initiative that I briefly mentioned earlier that was created in response to the lack of educational programs for young people disengaged from education or at risk of entering the youth justice system. Youth justice developed the program through partnerships with local secondary schools, registered training organisations, not-for-profit organisations and private businesses.

This is a first in terms of a true collective approach to addressing the underlying issues of youth offending. T2S, as we call it, is generally run over a three-month period and aims to help connect young people back into education or employment by providing certificate based training, life skills and links to local industries. However, young people can be engaged for longer periods of time, depending on their needs. Young people can attain a range of certificate-level qualifications, including horticulture, hospitality and retail, first aid, receiving their white cards—work safely in the construction industry—literacy and numeracy and assistance to get their Queensland driver's licence, which we know is a real impediment to getting jobs if they cannot get their driver's licence. That is in collaboration with the Department of Transport and Main Roads, where they help those young people study and pass their learner's. The funding of \$5 million over the next two years will assist the implementation to other sites across the state, giving more young people the opportunity to obtain certificates, qualifications and, more importantly, that self-esteem and dignity to want to progress. The sites we are extending it to are the Gold Coast, Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Redland Bay, Townsville and Cairns, just to name a few.

I just want to say what some of these outcomes have been. As at 15 July this year, 68 young people have commenced the program, with 61 completions having been achieved with the following outcomes: 85 certifications issued across eight courses; 85 per cent of attendees transitioning to further education or employment, with 24 young people re-engaged with mainstream school, or other education and 28 gaining employment or engaged with an employment agency; and 65 per cent have had no further offending. I met some of these kids recently. It is just extraordinary. We are not talking about kids who are at risk; we are talking about kids who have been serious recidivist offenders in the youth justice system who now have not offended for a very long time and have plans to go on to further education, on to university and on to jobs.

You asked me about the comparison with boot camps. The sentenced youth boot camp program resulted in only 36 young people successfully completing the program at a significant cost of \$14.3 million. This equates to approximately \$400,000 per completion for each individual participating in the program, with the reoffending rate of 65 per cent. We have a non-reoffending rate of 65 per cent. That had a reoffending rate of 65 per cent.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr BLEIJIE: I refer to the 2016 estimates prehearing questions on notice that the Attorney-General answered with respect to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. If you have a look it, from 2016 to 2020, there is a budget reduction—

Mrs D'ATH: Sorry, can I just ask which question number that was?

Mr BLEIJIE: It is question No. 6. Between 2016 and 2020, there is a reduction in funding for the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. Why are you cutting funding to the very organisation that is tackling alcohol fuelled violence?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. There is a small decline between 2016-17 and 2017-18. The reduction is as a consequence of licence fees. With the changes in the liquor service hours, we have also reduced the licensing fees that licensed venues have to pay. It has resulted in a saving to venues. Consequently, that has led to a reduction in revenue, as projected, for Liquor and Gaming.

As of 2018 and forward years, that is as a consequence of the current forward years funding of the tackling alcohol fuelled violence ceasing at that point. Of course, that is what we have funded it until, but we will be undertaking a comprehensive review at that time to look at what the results are of these initiatives and what initiatives we should take forward based on that evidence that we will deliver.

The current funding for tackling alcohol fuelled violence is currently in the forward estimates through to 2018, which is when we do the evaluation. That is where you see that decrease in funding, because it is attached to the tackling alcohol fuelled violence, but the funding decrease between 2016-17 and 2017-18 is as a consequence of the reduction in the licence fees revenue.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-general, with respect to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation, can you advise the committee what has been allocated this year to tackle alcohol fuelled violence, please?

Mr Mackie: I thank the member for the question. In 2016-17, the various components that make up Liquor and Gaming's relevance to alcohol fuelled violence is \$6.049 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: \$6 million and—

Mr Mackie: \$6.049 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: Can you advise the committee the year before, that please?

Mr Mackie: The year before budget was \$6.867 million.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Attorney-General, back to you. I understand that you have talked about the licence fees, but the licence fees going back in OLGR make up their compliance. If you are not budgeting as much money for OLGR, will you guarantee this committee and the people of Queensland that compliance activities will be the same as they are now, or more? If you cannot, is it because you are reducing the funding for OLGR?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. The difference in those years is that we had a specialist team in developing these strategies and initiatives. I can assure the member that there is no decrease in inspectors in the 2016-17 year compared to the 2015-16 year to undertake that important work of inspections and enforcement and compliance within the sector. I would have to say that this is compared to the 17 staff who were cut out of Liquor and Gaming between the years 2012 to 2014.

Mr BLEIJIE: How many inspectors are there presently for compliance operations in OLGR?

Mrs D'ATH: I would have to take that on notice. I can say how many inspections have been done.

Mr BLEIJIE: No, I am after the inspectors.

Mrs D'ATH: The number of inspectors, I will take that on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Chair, may I have the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming again, please? Thank you, Mr Ford. Welcome back. This question is with respect to page 16 of the SDS, Liquor and Gaming Regulation and the new laws that have been implemented where inspectors who go out to make sure that the new laws for the responsible of service of alcohol are being applied and are current within your inspectorate within the department. With the new laws with respect to where shots cannot be served to the public after midnight, will you have inspectors in every venue in Queensland, particularly the safe night precincts, to ensure that shots are not served after midnight?

Mr Ford: Obviously, Mr Bleijie, we do not have the resources and could never have the resources to have inspectors in every venue in Queensland after midnight.

Mr BLEIJIE: As follow-on question, Mr Ford, a shot is not able to be served. If your inspectors are in a premise and they are making sure that shots are not served after midnight—pretend this is a glass of whiskey—can a punter go to the bar and order a straight whiskey after midnight under the new laws?

Mr Ford: Yes, they certainly can, as long as that glass contains less than 45 mls of spirit.

Mr BLEIJIE: They cannot go and buy a shot but they can go and buy a whisky, which generally has more alcohol content than a shot?

Mr Ford: Comparable, yes.

Mr BLEIJIE: They can go to the bar and order a whisky. You have advised the committee you do not have inspectors in all premises. What I am trying to ascertain is, if you do have an inspector on a premises, is the individual then meant to drink at a slow pace that whisky? I am just not sure, from a compliance perspective, how your inspectorate will deal with this. A shot is one thing. They cannot order a shot after midnight—that is fine—but they can go and buy a glass of whisky at a bar. I presume one can drink that fairly quickly, so do your compliance officers seriously have to ascertain how slow one drinks a glass of whisky?

CHAIR: I will get you to rephrase that question so it eliminates the hypothetical behind it.

Mr BLEIJIE: How will your compliance officers deal with a situation if one buys a glass of whisky after midnight with a high alcohol content and has to drink that within a reasonable period of time or slowly?

Mr Ford: I think what you are alluding to is not really the role of our inspectors in terms of policing the way people consume their alcohol. It is really how our inspectors police the activities of the site in providing a responsible service of alcohol environment to their clients. Were there to be a situation where it became obvious that that activity you have described is happening, then clearly our inspectors would be in a position to take action against the site for breaching the responsible service of alcohol requirements that are upon them.

Mr BLEIJIE: The responsible service of alcohol kicks in when one is unduly intoxicated. When one purchases a drink when they are not unduly intoxicated and takes that drink away, there is no role for the OLGR compliance officers to advise how one drinks that drink; correct?

Mr Ford: No, that is entirely true. What our inspectors would be looking for is an activity within a licensed premises which was conducive to something that was not the responsible supply of alcohol or the responsible consumption of alcohol.

Mr BLEIJIE: Attorney, does this not make a complete farce of your policy? A punter cannot buy a shot after midnight but they can go and buy a glass of whisky, take it away from the bar and have it as a shot of whisky, and your laws do not apply to that individual. Does this not make a complete farce of your whole policy of 'no shots after midnight'?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. This is a policy that has been working successfully in New South Wales for some time. I held a round table with stakeholders across the liquor sector, including licensed venues, to talk about how we develop the definition of rapid consumption, high alcohol content drinks. In fact, it was the sector themselves that said, when it comes to defining high alcohol, rapid consumption drinks—the shots, shooters, blah blah blah—to us, 'That one's simple. That's easy. We can do that. That's easy to understand. As an industry it is easy to enforce.' Those were their own words and feedback to me at the round table. The issue was around the cocktails and around the alcohol content on the other bans. In terms of the actual issue of shots and shooters and those sorts of things, the sector said they were more than happy and more than capable and did not see any confusion in being able to enforce that.

As the commissioner said also, it is the responsibility of the venue to have their staff trained in responsible service of alcohol because there cannot be an inspector in every bar at every moment of the day. Where someone is trying to circumvent the ban by buying whisky in a normal whisky glass as opposed to a shot glass and they are coming back every five minutes because they have knocked it back as a shooter, then it is for the bar staff to see that it is not responsible service of alcohol to keep giving those drinks when they are being rapidly consumed. This is not about stopping people or controlling the way in which people drink; it is stopping a certain behaviour in relation to certain types of drinks. As we know, there are bars and there are consumers who want to just line up the shots at the bar and it is about knocking it back as quickly as possible. It is those types of drinks that we are seeking to ban after midnight.

As I say, I understand that the member believes there is concern about how to interpret this but, based on the communication and the consultation I have had with the sector itself, they are more than comfortable in how they are to interpret and how they are to apply this within their venues and they themselves said that the definition of bans and shots and shooters and all of that is easy to apply.

Mr BLEIJIE: My point is: will they not just substitute the shots they cannot get after midnight for another drink that they can actually legally go and buy with a greater alcohol content than a shot? What is to replace the shot glasses being lined up at the bar with rum, whisky or whatever other drinks they can buy? The policy does not make sense when you are trying to stop the rapid intake of alcohol. With respect, the responsible service of alcohol, as the commissioner confirmed, deals with those unduly intoxicated. Someone might be able to hold their liquor more than the person next to them, but when they go to the bar, if they are not unduly intoxicated, there is nothing really to stop the person selling the alcohol that the person asks for. I think you will find your policy will be a complete failure because people will substitute the shots for another drink they can legally obtain after midnight.

Mrs D'ATH: I think that is more a statement than a question, but I thank the member for his statement. The reality is, though, that there is evidence that shows that it works. That is why we have introduced this policy. That is why we are progressing this, because we are basing it on evidence. Unlike the previous government's policies in this area, it is all evidence based. To say that it will be a failure, well, time will tell. There will be a comprehensive independent evaluation of these initiatives, but

we are confident that we will see results because they have been tried and tested elsewhere and they have worked. When we talk about someone ordering a whisky, there is no evidence that those people are ordering a neat whisky and they are walking away and knocking it back within 30 seconds. There is not the evidence.

Mr BLEIJIE: It will happen from now on.

Mrs D'ATH: I appreciate the member is making a whole lot of hypotheticals that it will happen, but this is the problem with the previous government's policy: it is just hypothetical.

Mr BLEIJIE: It was the most comprehensive strategy in Australia.

Mrs D'ATH: There was no evidence supporting the LNP policy. Ours is all evidence based.

Mr BLEIJIE: Director-General, with respect to the Property Agents and Motor Dealers Act, the former government went through a substantial review and reduced by 26 to 30 per cent paperwork associated with buying and selling property in Queensland. Why is it that, with this new government, in the space of one year we have already seen a two-page increase in the Form 6 for property occupations—the last one issued 1 October 2016 and the one issued before that, 1 December 2014?

Mr Mackie: Thank you, member, for the question. If I can take that one on notice I will get back to you about those forms.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you. Attorney, the former government had a 26 per cent reduction in real estate forms. We have already seen in the last 12 months a two-page increase in the Form 6. Is it the view of your government that property agents and motor dealers will now start seeing increased paperwork, increased compliance and increased regulation, as we saw in previous Labor governments?

Mrs D'ATH: As the member knows, there is a comprehensive review going on into property law at the moment that the previous government started. That is ongoing. That is touching on a whole lot of different areas of property law and body corporates, including seller disclosure, and there is a paper coming out in relation to recommendations around seller disclosures as well. We are not going to pre-empt that process. That is ongoing and we will see what the recommendations are of the QUT review at the end of the day.

In relation to the example that the member has given, the director-general has already said that he will take that on notice and that is what we will do. The department and I will come back to the committee on that one.

Mr BLEIJIE: I seek leave to table those documents for the committee's benefit so they can get back to me.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr BLEIJIE: Going back to the liquor licensing laws, have you been able to ascertain yet how many inspectors there are across Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: I have taken that on notice. As the question on notice stated—and I am not sure; I think the member wanted the actual numbers of inspectors as opposed to the additional numbers of inspectors—up until 2018 the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation has 49 inspectors and 17 inspectors including a legal officer. That was in the question on notice.

Mr BLEIJIE: Thank you, Minister. With respect to the safe night precincts and the boards that have been established, which were established under the former government, there was a period of 12 months when these boards had no idea what was happening with liquor laws in Queensland, whether they were going to exist or not. The new laws came into effect on 1 July 2016. One of your ministerial colleagues issued press releases announcing funding for those boards, but the laws had already applied that day. It just seems everything was rushed with this policy—that boards find out they are getting money to start alcohol fuelled violence strategies the day the laws already apply. Would it not have been better to get the money beforehand so they could get strategies in place before the law started on 1 July?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. The funding in relation to those safe night boards was separate to the tackling alcohol fuelled violence initiatives. These are initiatives that the boards wanted to put forward. The funding applications were considered and the funding announcements made. The timing of those, quite honestly, was not directly linked in any way whatsoever. It was just a case of when the applications were considered and that determined when the announcements were made for those funding grants.

CHAIR: Thank you, Attorney. We will go to the member for Capalaba.

Mr BROWN: Minister, I refer you to page 5 of the SDS regarding the strategic objectives of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. Can you outline some of the important work the department officers are delivering across the state?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General certainly recognises that our people, our internal and client relationships and our reputation represent our greatest value. This year we had two Public Service medal recipients. One was Nicola Doumany, one of two officers who established Victim Assist Queensland in 2009, which heralded a new time in Queensland's history regarding the Public Service response toward victims of violent crime. The PSM recognised Ms Doumany's leadership in enabling the provision of support and care for some of Queensland's most vulnerable victims of violent crime and ensuring a smooth implementation of what could have been a controversial unit. A number of other jurisdictions have looked at Queensland's model in reviewing their own arrangements—an excellent measure of success.

Phil Venables, another Justice employee, has been a mediator and project manager in remote Indigenous communities, firstly on Mornington Island and now in Aurukun, since 2008. The award acknowledges his outstanding peacemaking service in those communities and his 30-plus years Public Service career working with vulnerable families and young people in remote and Far North Queensland. This includes his work with elders and families on the Mornington Island Restorative Justice Project between 2008 and 2012 to create a local peacemaking or mediation service that was inclusive of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and conformed to the requirements of the more formal justice system.

Our staff certainly make a difference, both locally and at a state level. For example, amongst many other excellent contributions to our success this year we saw various individuals demonstrate leadership and integrity, including the following three: Nathan Higgins, Indigenous Justice Programs, who after arriving in Pormpuraaw in July 2015 to deliver remote Justice of the Peace training successfully took on a mediation role when community unrest escalated; Jason Thiesfield, Corporate Services, developing an innovative interim solution for ensuring the stability of the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre's security system in advance of a full upgrade; and Tenneil Murray, who had been instrumental in the recent establishment of the Youth Justice First Nations Action Board, an advocacy and advisory board assisting and delivering on the Youth Justice Strategic Plan. This comprised Youth Justice Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff representatives from all regions, detention centres and CBD locations.

The group is particularly focused on improving our capability to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system. I could go on all day. We have a wonderful team across all of my agencies in youth justice, the justice services, liquor and gaming—the list goes on. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the great work that all of them do and the very difficult work that they do on a daily basis.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS regarding the operations of Queensland's courts. Can you please provide an outline of the consultation that was undertaken by your department or the courts before it was announced that a federal judge would apparently be located within the state court in Rockhampton?

Mrs D'ATH: While I am pleased that the federal government has allocated an additional federal court judicial resource to serve the Rockhampton community, it was disappointing that there was no formal consultation with me. In fact, there was no consultation at all with me, with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General or with the Chief Justice of Queensland about accommodating Judge Demack and her support staff at the Rockhampton Courthouse before the announcement was actually made. We found out through a Facebook post that that announcement had been made.

While the department moved quickly to establish temporary arrangements for Judge Demack, a more permanent solution is required due to a lack of available facilities in the Rockhampton Courthouse and the need for an additional courtroom, mediation room and storage space. I have been up there and looked through the courthouse. There was one suggestion that we give up a room to potentially be a new associate's room. That room is where QCAT holds its hearings. That was not going to be acceptable, because I did not want to displace QCAT when they come on circuit through the area. I have been advised that Judge Demack will use Rockhampton as a base and circuit to Brisbane. I understand that that has been occurring quite often, as well as to the regional centres of Gladstone, Emerald and Mackay. These regional centres may also require alterations to accommodate the judge.

I have been advised that the director-general and the senior officers of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General are working with representatives from the Federal Court to identify options to permanently integrate the Family Court into the Rockhampton Courthouse building. I also understand that Senator Brandis has committed to making funds available for the renovations required to ensure Judge Demack is appropriately accommodated in the Rockhampton Courthouse. Any arrangements about the use of the court will be subject to the Chief Justice's agreement who, under section 18 of the Supreme Court of Queensland Act 1991, has the power in relation to anything to be done for the control and maintenance of all Supreme Court buildings in Queensland. I found it quite disrespectful to the Chief Justice that she was not consulted, rather just announcing it on social media.

Ms PEASE: I refer to page 16 of the SDS, regarding the regulation of gaming in Queensland. Minister, can you please outline the proposed changes to taxation for clubs and what that will mean for community clubs across Queensland?

Mrs D'ATH: Recently the Treasurer announced that the government is looking at changing the taxation arrangements for clubs in Queensland. The proposed changes to gaming machine taxation are intended to assist the club industry and preserve club, sporting and social facilities for Queensland communities. I should say that this is still in consultation, but the number of licensed club venues in Queensland is declining. I note, for example, research commissioned by Clubs Queensland indicates that 69 club venues have closed their doors since 2011. There are few if any clubs emerging to take the place of those that have closed.

While larger experienced clubs have the means and experience to assist smaller struggling clubs through amalgamations and mergers, they are discouraged from doing so due to the disadvantageous taxation arrangements applied under the Gaming Machine Act 1991. Under these arrangements, the gaming machine revenue from all premises operated by a single club is aggregated before a sliding-scale tax rate is applied. Unlike someone new coming in who gets to pay the lower tax, if you are an existing club seeking to merge or amalgamate with an ongoing club, you are disadvantaged because your gaming revenue is assessed across all of them. That is despite the fact that if someone new comes in, potentially they are eligible to have up to 300 gaming machines, yet for an existing club that amalgamates with another club over two venues it is 450. It is actually less. For one venue it is 300; over two venues it is 450. Again it reduces the proportion if you have three or more, which I think is 500 but I stand to be corrected on that figure.

I understand that for multiple clubs—a single club owning or partnering with multiple clubs—the number of gaming machines that are available across those multiple venues was increased by the previous government. Nonetheless, it does mean that they cannot have 300 at every venue, which is fine and we have no intentions of changing or increasing that. However, in addition, there is a barrier around taxation.

As a local member, when you look at your local clubs such as the bowls clubs, the RSLs and the surf lifesaving clubs, those are community facilities. Once they are gone, they are gone for good. When you see a bowls club shut down, that is it. Let us face it: often they are on valuable land and developers cannot wait to snatch them up. Once those bowls clubs are gone, no-one is going to build new bowls clubs. I do not know the last time a bowls club was built. Therefore, to allow existing clubs to come in and amalgamate or merge with them is a beneficial step. It helps retain in our communities existing facilities and, importantly, it helps retain jobs. If you do not allow this, if you do not provide this incentive or at least remove the barriers, then potentially they do shut. Since 2011, 69 clubs have shut. That means job losses. Over that period, there has not been one new greenfield club built—not one. For the first time, we are seeing ground broken at North Lakes for a new club to be built.

This is not increasing the number of gaming machines in the state. That number remains capped. It is removing barriers. Because of time restrictions I will not, but I could read a long list of clubs that have really been saved as a consequence of other clubs stepping in and amalgamating or merging with them.

CHAIR: I might ask you to put those on notice, if the committee agrees.

Mrs D'ATH: It is a list that Clubs Queensland has provided of its members. I am happy to make sure that we table that.

CHAIR: Thank you. I go to page 39 of the SDS in regards to the Legal Practitioner Interest on Trust Accounts Fund and its financial status. Attorney-General, can you please outline to the committee how changes to the funding will provide certainty for community legal centres and legal professions more broadly?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. I know the member for Mansfield is interested in this. He raised it in his budget speech as well. It is an important issue. It has been an issue going around for some time. It is not unique to Queensland, although I think we might have been the last to move on this issue, with other jurisdictions realising that their legal practitioner interest on trust accounts were not sufficient to retain the funding needed to support Legal Aid services and legal services across the state. Certainly in Queensland that is the case. We have seen it declining significantly over years. To give some examples, in 2008-09, the global financial crisis, it took the biggest dip. Between 2007-08 and 2009-10, the annual LPITAF revenue halved from \$59.5 million to \$29.8 million. It has remained level at that point, but we know that it is not enough. Since that time, every government has had to top that up with consolidated funds to ensure that there is sufficient funding for legal services.

To explain what this fund covers, it is legal assistance services by Legal Aid Queensland and community organisations, mostly community legal centres; legal profession regulation services by the Legal Services Commission and the Bar Association of Queensland; and law library services for legal professionals and the community by the Supreme Court Library Queensland. We have chosen to move to a more sustainable model. From 1 July 2016, this government has commenced implementing a sustainable long-term funding model for legal assistance, legal professional regulation and law library services. Under the new model, funding will be fully appropriated from the Consolidated Fund. All revenue from the solicitor trust accounts will be swept into the Consolidated Fund to meet agreed expenditure. All revenue from the solicitor trust accounts will be swept into the Consolidated Fund on a monthly basis, which will maintain the underlining policy rationale of using LPITAF funds for legal assistance services.

For the first time—and this is important when we talk about how this creates long-term certainty and sustainability—triennial agreements will be entered into with Legal Aid Queensland, the Legal Services Commission, the Bar Association Queensland and the Supreme Court Library Queensland to achieve agreed outcomes. These agreements will set the expenditure limits for the specified entities and bring them into line with the CLCs currently on triennial agreements. The approach will provide certainty for entities as the need for annual agreements is superseded, facilitate longer-term decision making, promote innovation and reduce the administrative burden to government. Providing a sustainable funding source will ensure approximately 935 full-time equivalent jobs will deliver and maintain Queensland's legal assistance, legal professional regulation and law library services. LPITAF revenues will continue, importantly, to be reported in the financial statements of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's annual report to ensure full transparency as to the contribution to meeting legal assistance needs.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: I will direct my next couple of questions to Mr Mackie. Mr Mackie, I refer to page 6 and 7 of the SDS dealing with courthouse clearance rates. To make sure I understand the figures correctly, I take you to the third or fourth box down in the table on page 6, which deals with the Court of Appeal. It talks about a backlog indicator for both civil and criminal law, where the target was zero per cent. Are you with me?

Mr Mackie: I believe so.

Mr WALKER: The way I read it, for the backlog indicator, the target is zero per cent, that is, it is targeted to have no cases greater than 24 months outstanding for both civil and criminal areas.

Mr Mackie: I am with you now, member. I am on the right page.

Mr WALKER: As I read it, the target was to have no cases outstanding after 24 months in civil or criminal areas.

Mr Mackie: Yes.

Mr WALKER: The actual was four per cent outstanding in criminal and one per cent in civil. Although the figure is higher, that is effectively an under performance to the target, as I understand it.

Mr Mackie: Yes. Zero means that there is no backlog in the courts, which means that the clearance rate is whatever is coming in as lodgements is going out as finalisations in equal amounts, so zero means no backlog mounting—so anything above that.

Mr WALKER: Going quickly through them, in the Court of Appeal the target was not met, that is, the backlogs in either civil or criminal. If we look a couple of boxes down to the Supreme Court trial division, the target was not met in civil and it achieved slightly ahead in criminal. Going to the next page, I am looking at District Court appeals. With the backlog there, the target was not reached in either civil or criminal. I go to the Magistrates Court, in which case the targets were not reached in either civil or

criminal. I am about halfway down page 7. For the Childrens Court, targets were not met in either civil or criminal. In reading those, there seems to be a problem right throughout the system with your department being able to meet the targets set by your own department in respect of backlogs in courts right across the board. I am interested in your response to that and why that is happening.

Mr Mackie: It would be unacceptable to have anything more than zero in terms of a backlog as a target in our court system. It is always going to be the goal to ensure that we are at least pushing out what is coming into the courts. There are a number reasons we do not hit that for certain aspects during certain years. That is in the note on page 10.

It is around the lodgements that come through in a year. They are steadily increasing in the courts. The government has been aware that that is the case. We put in a submission this year on the basis that the courts are feeling they have increased workloads. The government has responded particularly in terms of the courts by investing \$20 million over the next two years—\$10 million a year—for that very reason.

There are operational reasons in the courts that that does not happen—the availability of parties, parties being prepared to proceed. There are some natural things that happen. Certainly there has been a spike in the number of lodgements coming into our courts at all jurisdictional levels, particularly in the Magistrates Court. There is a whole ecosystem of reasons that happens, such as the number of police on the ground, changes in the law et cetera. The investment that we are getting in 2016-17 and beyond in the courts is hopefully going to make sure that we get back to zero in terms of the backlog and our finalisations equalling our lodgements.

Mr WALKER: What you said about there being a spike in lodgements and so on might explain why one or two jurisdictions fell out of kilter, but is there not an endemic, across-the-board issue here when so many of the jurisdictions are failing their targets?

Mr Mackie: No, I do not think so. I have great confidence in what goes on in our court system. They deal with huge workloads. As a lawyer yourself, Mr Walker, you know the complications that can occur in courts between parties et cetera. There are some natural things in the legal system that prevent matters from always proceeding as planned.

Certainly those backlogs are not horrendous by any means, given the quantity of lodgements coming into those courts at this point in time. Again, the investment of \$20 million over the next two years is going to certainly help our court system. Really, that is the first investment we have had for some period of time.

We have other ends of the justice system being invested in, such as police and other entities down the track, but the courts did not have a growth model in place. For example, if you put a number of police on, it will transition into the court system six to 12 months later with an increase in the number of lodgements. The courts have dealt with it over a significant period of time. The money that we are getting in 2016-17 and onwards is going to be a great help. I would like to see those targets come back to zero as soon as possible with the money.

Mr WALKER: Mr Chairman, I seek leave to table an article from the *Cairns Post* of 19 July.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr WALKER: I have a copy for the Attorney. It is titled 'Cairns judge raises concerns over case backlog'. Attorney, I draw your attention to this article. It relates to comments made by His Honour Judge Brian Harrison. It reads—

A senior judge has called Cairns' legal fraternity into an urgent meeting and said he was "on the verge of giving up" over a huge case backlog building in the city.

Speaking in the Cairns District Court yesterday, Judge Brian Harrison said more hearings had fallen over due to legal delays this year than had actually gone ahead.

...

"I want to have a meeting with the profession ... about the ways things are not happening around here," he said.

Having read the figures we have just been through in the SDS, having heard what Mr Mackie said, having heard what His Honour has said, is His Honour Judge Harrison not onto something? Are the people of Cairns not being failed by their court system? What are you going to do about it?

CHAIR: Before you answer that, I will rule that question out of order and ask the member to rephrase it.

Mr WALKER: I am not sure of the basis upon which it is ruled out of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: The imputations that you applied to it.

Mr WALKER: Given what the Attorney has heard in relation to backlogs throughout the court system, referred to in my exchange with Mr Mackie, what is she going to do to fix those backlogs?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. To expand further on what the director-general was saying, that is why we are making the first serious injection of funds into the courts in more than a decade—\$20 million over the next two years. I want to put into context some of the numbers that the member has talked about in terms of the clearance rates in our courts. This might give a bit of an explanation as to why we are seeing what we are seeing.

As at 31 May this year, when compared to the previous year's data, there was an increase of 11.3 per cent in adult criminal charges. I will put that into numbers because they are quite significant. The figure of 373,071 criminal charges in the Magistrates Court went to 415,086. Initiating domestic violence applications increased by 21.6 per cent.

When you look at clearance rates you have to look at the significant increase in workload. Their clearance rates dropped by four per cent but the workload in the criminal and civil area increased by 11.3 per cent and 21.6 per cent respectively in the Magistrates Court. In the Supreme Court and District Court they are experiencing significant increases as well. As at 31 May, Supreme Court criminal lodgements have actually gone up by 25.4 per cent when compared to the same period last year. District Court criminal lodgements have increased by 6.5 per cent.

You can see the workload. We know that domestic and family violence is one part of that. That has been increased in our courts. That is why we need to make sure that we are investing more broadly in the criminal justice system.

We have seen an increase in police numbers for many years. We are seeing an overpopulation in our prisons. When you increase police numbers you get more charges. You get police going out and doing their work and consequently more people facing the courts. What does that require? It requires a further investment in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. We are doing that with an increase in funding of \$2.969 million in the 2016-17 budget and an increase of \$12.1 million over four years for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. There will be an additional 26 permanent positions.

I think that goes directly to the article you have just shown me, member for Mansfield. I believe the criticism in the article—and I do not want to reflect on any comments by any judicial officers—was particularly directed at prosecutions, as I understand it, and was asking for the message to go back to their boss, being the government and the minister, about the pressures on prosecutions.

That is why we have 26 additional FTEs coming into the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. In addition to that, we need to be investing in the courts. That is what we are doing. We are doing that with \$10 million per year over the next two years. We are investing in our courts and extra registry staff because under the previous government there had been significant cuts across our courts and across the department. We are also easing some of those pressures by putting the diversionary programs back in place—that is, giving the courts options. Diversionary programs are providing opportunities.

I want to add in relation to the 26 new positions in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that 17 of those will be in the regions. I am advised that in Ipswich, Beenleigh and Brisbane there will be five additional positions and three in Cairns. There will be three new senior legal officers in Cairns through the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr WALKER: If I can build on the report from His Honour Judge Harrison, it is also reported that His Honour Judge Wall of the Southport District Court yesterday made some comments. I have not seen the comments myself and I am working off a second-hand report. I understand Judge Wall also raised difficulties with delays in the Gold Coast District Court. He has asked practitioners to bring this to the attention of the government. Once again, if we look at the figures in this report and take the reported comments of His Honour Judge Wall to heart, are the people of the Gold Coast not being let down? What are you particularly going to do about the Gold Coast situation?

Mrs D'ATH: What we are doing is investing \$20 million over the next two years. That is the biggest injection our courts have seen in more than a decade. When I talk about \$20 million over two years, that is separate to the \$12.1 million that we are investing in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions over the next four years. Three of those new DPP staff will be at Southport.

That is why we are investing the way we are. When we talk about Southport particularly, that is why we are investing in the domestic and family violence court trial in Southport. We understand that there has been an increase in work before the courts. That is why we want to see an investment in our courts.

That is why we will see additional magistrates. We will see more full-time registry staff put on. The immediate assumption is that there is a demand for extra judges, but in fact there is a real call for good-quality, experienced registry staff, which they did lose with the cuts under the previous government. Having good-quality, experienced staff makes a significant difference in relation to the efficiency of the court. Unfortunately, many staff across my department have been in temporary roles. What some of this funding will do is see us convert those temporary positions into permanent positions which means we can keep that expertise in our courts, as we should.

Mr WALKER: I take Mr Mackie to the top of page 9 and the service standard target for QCAT. QCAT is supposed to be a tribunal in which people get easy, efficient access to justice. It is a tribunal that is supposed to take away their dissatisfaction with the cumbersomeness of the Rolls Royce legal system and yet you only set a 70 per cent target for client satisfaction, which you are meeting. It is a pretty low target? Why is it such a low target?

Mr Mackie: I thank the member for the question. I am just having a look at that now in terms of the 70 per cent target. I am just having a look in the SDS as we speak. There is not a rationale in front of me as to why it is 70 per cent. Obviously these targets are set based on the knowledge of the people who work in those particular areas. Seventy per cent is client satisfaction. Obviously it is an arbitrary process to a certain degree. Even though it is not in the Magistrates, District and Supreme courts it is still an arbitrary process.

Mr WALKER: Would you agree it is not a stretch target—70 per cent?

Mr Mackie: It is in one of those environments where there is a winner and a loser, at the end of the day, when matters are brought before it. It is how that client satisfaction rating is being determined at the end of day. If it is taking into account the broad church of who uses QCAT, some people, depending on the outcome, may not be responding in a positive way. I can only assume, without knowing the exact rationale behind 70 per cent, that 70 per cent is quite a good indicator for an arbitrary process when there is a winner and a loser. That is what they aim at.

CHAIR: We will move to government questions.

Ms PEASE: I refer to page 5 of the SDS regarding domestic and family violence initiatives. What funding commitments has the Palaszczuk government made for 2016-17 to help address the unacceptable levels of domestic and family violence in our communities?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. I note that question on notice No. 12 refers to this topic. However, I am pleased to provide specific information to the committee about the legislative changes.

On 28 February last year the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, chaired by the Hon. Dame Quentin Bryce, delivered its report *Not now, not ever: putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*. The Queensland government is committed to implementing all task force recommendations, including more than 40 recommendations to improve the justice system's response to domestic and family violence.

During the last year significant work has been undertaken to implement a range of recommendations to improve justice system responses including legislative reforms to the court and coronial system—changes to provide a fairer, more protective and timely outcome for victims and to hold perpetrators to account. The Coroners (Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board) Amendment Act 2015 was passed last year. This legislation sets up a new, independent board to help identify possible gaps in support services and seek to prevent future domestic and family violence related deaths.

In addition, the amendments were made to the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Act 2015 and the Criminal Law (Domestic Violence) Amendment Act 2016 to increase the maximum penalties for breaches of domestic violence orders under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012, allow the domestic and family violence context of criminal offending to be recorded by way of notation, ensure victims of domestic violence automatically have status as a special witness—which enables the court to make a range of orders and directions to support them in giving evidence—make domestic and family violence an aggravating factor on sentencing and create an offence of choking and suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting.

We have seen some early figures, particularly in relation to the creation of the offence of choking and suffocation or strangulation, that there have already been a number of charges being laid by the Queensland Police Service using that offence and also notations being put on records. It is good to see. I certainly get positive feedback from the police that they feel more empowered by having these

offences within the act under which they can charge people, and they certainly are already. It is pleasing to see that we are seeing charges laid for those offences. Of course we would rather see no charges being laid, but, as we know, the number of charges and the number of people coming forward are going to keep escalating while we continue to further educate the community to come forward and talk about domestic and family violence and to report it.

While some will see the increase in reporting and the figures I have talked about in our courts as concerning, I am really pleased that victims now feel that they can have faith and trust in the justice system. Before they did not want to come forward. They were scared to come forward. They were scared of being revictimised through the court system. They now feel much more comfortable to go through that process. That has a lot to do with community awareness and education and the changes we are making in our court system and to the law for the police. I am very pleased to say that we are doing that.

There is still more to do. I want to briefly touch on the fact that we will still be bringing forward legislation to give effect to the national domestic violence order. Agreement has been reached through the Council of Australian Governments for all attorneys-general to do this and to establish a national domestic violence order scheme. This will be a comprehensive information-sharing system which will support the national legislation.

Getting the legislation in place is the first step. We then need to have a system that works across jurisdictions to recognise those orders, and that is the bigger challenge that all jurisdictions are working on. In addition, we have a consultation paper out currently on the implementation of a statutory sexual assault counselling privilege based on the New South Wales model which was issued earlier this year. The proposed privilege will limit access to confidential communications between a victim or alleged victim of a sexual assault and their counsel in certain legal proceedings. In this year's budget funding of \$2.2 million over four years has been provided to establish a sexual assault counselling privilege service to provide legal assistance to victims and counsellors who wish to claim privilege.

Lastly, we are currently reviewing the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009. It has been completed and the review report was tabled in parliament on 16 December 2015. The report recommended that the Victims of Crime Assistance Act be amended to expand the definition of acts of violence to include an act of domestic and family violence to align with the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012. This change will ensure that all victims of domestic and family violence who have experienced both physical and emotional abuse will be able to seek financial assistance. Legislation to implement this amendment is currently being developed.

Ms PEASE: I would like to refer again to page 5 of the SDS regarding domestic and family violence. Would the Attorney be able to update the committee on the trial of the domestic violence specialist court at Southport courthouse?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. As the member would be aware, the government has committed \$6.106 million over 2015-16 to 2016-17 to trial the Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Court in Southport on the Gold Coast dealing exclusively with domestic and family violence matters. The trial commenced on 1 September 2015. We extended that to 30 June 2017 because in the early days of that trial we realised that we kept adapting and changing. We went from one dedicated magistrate, being Magistrate Colin Strofield, to two, engaging Magistrate Barbara Tynan to preside over the court because of the significant demand that the court was experiencing. We wanted to make sure that it was after we made those further enhancements and changes that we started measuring as to the success of the trial. It was important to give adequate time to evaluate the court's work.

The specialist court was part of recommendations 96 to 100 of the *Not now, not ever* report. The specialist court provides victims with consistent, coordinated and timely access to justice. Some of the key elements include duty lawyers to support both parties—that is extremely important; it cannot be just one party—access to support information and referral for victims and perpetrators; dedicated magistrates presiding over all civil domestic violence proceedings and contraventions of domestic violence orders and related criminal matters; dedicated prosecutors; a specialist registry as a single point of contact; access to interpreters; access to domestic and family violence perpetrator programs; and coordination of the relevant services.

To give you a gauge of the sorts of numbers we are talking about, from 2011-12 to 2014-15 the number of applications increased from 2,656 to 3,448. That was a 30 per cent increase. From 2014-15 to 2015-16 the number of applications increased from 3,448 to 5,439, an increase of 60 per cent in one year. This increase has continued over the life of the trial. Comparing the number of applications

between 1 July 2014 and 31 March 2015, before the trial commenced, with the same period between 1 July 2015 and March 2016 applications have increased by 44 per cent. Despite the increase in applications, the specialist court's response has been notable, with victims being provided an opportunity to obtain protection in most instances on the first occasion their matter is heard. There has been an interim evaluation of this, and we are getting very positive support from interviewing aggrieved respondents, key stakeholders and staff members of the court. There were 45 interviews and the results were very positive from all of those stakeholders about how well it is performing so far.

CHAIR: Attorney, can I take you to page 12 of the SDS in regard to Strategic Policy and Legal Services. Would the Attorney please update the committee on the minister's responsibilities to the re-establishment of the SAC?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the chair for his question. The Sentencing Advisory Council was established in 2010 to advise the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice about sentencing matters, to inform the community about sentencing and incorporating community's views into sentencing policy, and to publish research and statistics about sentencing. The council was disbanded in 2012 under the previous government despite the high level of value the council delivered not only to the Queensland community but also I believe to the legal profession and the judiciary.

I am proud of the fact that pursuant to legislation earlier this year the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council is being re-established. Ultimately the Sentencing Advisory Council will play a critical role in building public confidence in the courts and the criminal justice system. As we all know, when it comes to sentencing, there is a lot of media reports. There is a lot of public commentary. There is a lot of commentary on social media that I am well aware of as the Attorney-General. There is a lot of criticism of the courts in sentencing.

A lot of that criticism is based on a lack of information as to the context of that sentencing or all of the circumstances of that matter. It is very easy to look at an offence and look at the sentence and judge whether you think that is fair or not without knowing what all the other circumstances are—whether the person has pleaded guilty and a whole range of factors that the courts take into account in weighing this up. We believe it is really important to get a proper analysis and research done around this sentencing—what is the range of sentencing and how does that work?—to better inform the community about sentencing.

It will also help government of all persuasions to develop policy and legislation. We have just talked about domestic and family violence. We recently talked about changes to sentencing on breaches of domestic violence orders. What we want to look at into the future through the Sentencing Advisory Council is: has that had any effect? Have there been any changes in the sentencing issued by the courts? We have increased the range but have the courts changed their behaviour in relation to sentencing? If not, as policymakers, as legislators, we need to step back and say, 'Do we need to do something more?' The community's expectations and the parliament's expectations were that we will see higher sentences being issued in relation to those matters based on the seriousness of the matters and whether we see that in practice. The Sentencing Advisory Council certainly has a very important role and will provide government with the necessary tools to ensure sentencing achieves the outcomes as set out in the Penalties and Sentences Act 1992.

I would like to briefly talk about the composition of the Sentencing Advisory Council. The composition of the council membership, which will have members with expertise and experience from a range of backgrounds, will represent a wide range of stakeholders in the criminal justice system and will include representatives of the broader community as well as specialists with knowledge of sentencing. A public process calling for expressions of interest was undertaken in June this year and I am pleased to say that it attracted 77 expressions of interest from a wide range of expertise and experience. With due consideration, I look forward to progressing the appointments in the near future.

CHAIR: I have one last question because I hand over to non-government members. I refer to page 16 of the SDS regarding national consumer law protections. Would the Attorney please outline the recent reforms in the country of origin labelling?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. Again, this is an issue that might not get much attention but to consumers it is extremely important. When people look at labelling on products in their supermarkets, they want to know whether or not this is an Australian product. What is the origin of the food?

On 31 March 2016 the Legislative and Governance Forum on Consumer Affairs agreed to reform the country of origin labelling system for certain priority groups to give Australian consumers clearer and more meaningful information about the food they buy. I am pleased to represent Queensland on

the consumer affairs forum which consists of all Commonwealth, state, territory and New Zealand ministers responsible for fair trading and consumer protection laws. Under the country of origin labelling changes, most food that is made, produced or grown in Australia will need to carry a label that includes a kangaroo symbol as well as text and a bar chart indicating the percentage of Australian ingredients. The new labelling requirements will mean that Australian consumers will have greater certainty about the source of ingredients in their food.

To implement the labelling changes, a new information standard for country of origin labelling has been made under the Australian Consumer Law. Although the information standard for country of origin labelling commenced on 1 July of this year, the new requirements will not become mandatory until 1 July 2018. What this means is more certainty which means more control for consumers. Not only will they see that it is made, produced or grown in Australia; through the bar chart they are now going to see exactly how much of it is Australian product that goes into that.

CHAIR: I will hand over to the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, budget paper 4, page 141, details that \$70,000 annually is going to be raised from the QCAT fee structure which will be changed in 2016-17 to provide a disincentive—

Mrs D'ATH: Sorry, member for Mansfield, what page are you referring to of the SDS?

Mr WALKER: I am referring to budget paper 4. It is picked up on page 26 of the SDS, but the particular figure I am talking about is the \$70,000 referred to in the budget papers as being raised from an amended QCAT fee structure to provide a disincentive for unmeritorious appeals. The fees for appeals in QCAT from 1 July range from \$315.70 to \$2,507 depending upon matter type. It is quite a considerable fee already. Attorney, who was consulted on this change? How does it fit into your government's policy of no new fees and charges? Why is it that increasing fees to ordinary Queenslanders will have any effect on discouraging unmeritorious appeals?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. There was certainly consultation with the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal in relation to their concerns about the number of applications coming before QCAT on an annual basis and what they perceive as unmeritorious applications. When we talk about the burden on Queenslanders, it is not just those who are seeking to pursue appeal; we have to think about every other person who seeks to get access to the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal but are otherwise getting delayed in their matters coming forward because of these matters being heard.

In the figures that I have been provided with, since 2009 an average of 400 applications for leave to appeal and 160 requests for reopening have been made to QCAT each year, and up to 360 of these applications have been unsuccessful. We are not introducing a new fee at all. This is in line with the government's policy. This is an existing fee because we are talking about the existing filing fee in relation to appeal matters. We are removing the requirement to refund half of the filing fee. People are already finding that money up-front, so you cannot say it is an additional burden or in any way a barrier or impediment for people filing their appeal; they are already filing the appeal, paying this money. They are already doing it.

There is no increase in how much they are paying to file the appeal. The increase is related to how much they are getting refunded. It is certainly an administrative burden for QCAT to have to refund those funds, depending on the nature of the matter, for unsuccessful applications for leave to appeal and reopening. This is to minimise financial hardship. It does allow for the principal registrar to accept a reduced fee of \$100 for an appeal rather than waive the fee in appropriate cases. In that respect, for those situations where the principal registrar deems there is financial hardship, they are better off because now they can reduce the fee of \$100 for an appeal rather than make them pay the \$157.85 through to \$315.70 up-front and then refund that at the end.

As the member would appreciate, it is important to ensure that people are not bringing unmeritorious cases before the court and that the court's time is not being bogged down by those applications, at the same time as ensure there is access—and fair access—to our court system. That is what the balance is and that is what we seek to achieve with QCAT and access to QCAT. Currently, the respondent to QCAT proceedings may make a counterapplication against the applicant that they do not pay a filing fee. QCAT has said that there should be a counterapplication fee which is introduced as well to ensure that for both parties, where they are making applications, there is equity in relation to the costs being incurred there.

In relation to a photocopy fee, again, it is reasonable for QCAT to be reimbursed basically the fees, the costs and the time spent in photocopying for parties coming before. What we have now done with these changes is bring QCAT into line with the fees that are applying in the Queensland courts.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, it is a bit cute to say, as you did earlier, that it does not really matter, that you are still paying the same amount up-front and you just will not get as much refunded. In fact, if your government is 70 grand better off as a result of this, the litigants are 70 grand worse off so it does affect them. Your intention is in fact to discourage people going to QCAT.

Mrs D'ATH: Not at all, but the figures show that the majority of applications coming before QCAT on appeal are unmeritorious applications. It is reasonable to say that if people are going to pursue unmeritorious applications through the Court of Appeal they do not get refunded half of those fees for progressing that matter. I think it is reasonable to say that they should incur that cost for the appeal that they filed and progressed before QCAT. As I say, this brings it in line with the Queensland courts. It is more than reasonable to ask those who are seeking to appeal the matter who are unsuccessful to not get refunded half of that fee that they incurred.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, I take you to page 23 of the SDS in relation to judicial officers and in particular the appointment of judicial officers via the judicial protocol. What level of consultation was there on the judicial protocol that you recently released?

Mrs D'ATH: There was a public discussion paper put out in relation to establishing a judicial protocol for appointments. There were a number of submissions received by parties. That was put on the Department of Justice and Attorney-General's website so there was broad consultation, in addition to consultation I took directly with legal stakeholders and the opposition, asking their views on it. Importantly, we had a discussion paper out publicly. We asked for submissions. We considered those submissions in developing and introducing our protocol. I also consulted with the heads of jurisdiction.

Mr WALKER: Was there specific and targeted consultation with the legal profession?

Mrs D'ATH: Yes.

Mr WALKER: I acknowledge that you did have consultation with us but that was at a fairly high level, not at a detailed level. Was the consultation with the legal profession at a similar level?

Mrs D'ATH: Obviously, I do not want to go into the detail of any private discussions with the legal profession, but in addition to meeting with the Queensland Law Society and the Bar Association and having discussions, I have to say, on a number of occasions in relation to judicial protocol, the Bar Association of Queensland did not put in a submission but the Queensland Law Society did. I certainly took those views into account as well in relation to developing the protocol that we did.

Mr WALKER: Were bodies like the Law Society and the Bar Association given the opportunity to look at drafts of the protocol to help develop those?

Mrs D'ATH: We did not release the draft on the basis that, on the submissions that had been received through the discussion paper, there was little difference in relation to what should be the final protocol. There were some suggestions around the size of the panel and how many processes or steps the panel should go through to make recommendations to the Attorney-General, but there was a pretty consistent view across all of the submissions in relation to whether a panel should be set up, how it should work as far as transparency and having a register of expressions of interest, for example, and who should be chair. For example, the proposal for a retired judge was in many of the submissions that we received.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, do you concede that proper and effective consultation would normally mean that the bodies you are consulting with—like the Law Society, the Bar Association and the opposition—would have an opportunity to look at draft documents either as they evolved or, at the very least, at the final draft to get an appropriate comment? Doesn't it mean that the consultation is largely meaningless without that?

Mrs D'ATH: Not at all. We have gone through a full public consultation session. It has not just been private meetings with some key stakeholders in the legal profession; it has been a full public consultation process, which I think was really important. As you know, there had been a fair bit of criticism about the way appointments were made under the previous government. That is why the Labor Party made a decision, as part of our election commitment, to develop a protocol for judicial appointments, because the community needed to have faith in the process and there needed to be more transparency around the process.

The process we went through is this: releasing a discussion paper; getting submissions from the public and also the key legal stakeholders—those who wanted and chose to put in a submission; considering those submissions; having conversations and consultation with key stakeholders; and, I should say, when I had a draft, having a conversation and taking each of those stakeholders—the Law Society and the Bar Association—through the key elements of that draft. I did not provide them with a copy of the draft. I have to say that the draft protocol is two pages, so it was pretty easy for me, in a conversation with those stakeholders, to go through all of the key elements within that protocol and the criteria that we sought to rely on which would be attached to that protocol, which I did, as well as heads of jurisdiction.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, the protocol at the moment proposes a register of interest for those seeking appointment. You could imagine that there may be difficulties for people who are active in the legal profession who may want to be considered for judicial appointment but want to do that on a confidential basis. Obviously it may affect how their colleagues see them if they have put their name up. Is it intended that RTI will apply to that register?

Mrs D'ATH: I do not believe that RTI will because it is a recruitment process. If any information was released, it certainly would not allow the identification of those individuals who were being considered, like any recruitment process. I think I have about 300 statutory appointments that I am responsible for. In any one of those recruitment processes, you would not release the names and identifiable details in relation to those individuals. This would be no different.

I understand that this is new for the profession, I get that. I get that some might be nervous about putting their name on an expression of interest, but this has worked quite well in other jurisdictions. I think any person who meets the eligibility criteria who is interested in being considered to serve in our courts should have the right to put themselves forward, as opposed to relying on a small few in the legal profession to potentially put their names forward to be considered. I believe this is a much more open process in allowing those in the legal profession to be considered, just as happens in the Magistrates Court right now. Register expression of interest happens right now. There is already a list for magistrates that I get to look at and consider. We are just extending it beyond magistrates, and I think that is a good thing for our courts.

Mr WALKER: I refer to page 14 of the SDS relating to youth justice changes. I direct my question to the director-general. Director-General, what is the additional cost to the department of keeping 17-year-olds who have six months or more left to serve in detention in youth detention rather than transferring them to an adult facility?

Mr Mackie: I do not think I actually have that cost on me at the moment, so if I could take that on notice I will get back to you.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, are you happy with that?

Mrs D'ATH: I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr WALKER: Thanks. Attorney, do you know the cost of reinstating court referred youth justice conferencing for 2016-17 and also across the forward estimates?

Mrs D'ATH: If the member gives me one moment, I will get those costs for him. As stated earlier—and I apologise, the member may not have been in the room or at the table when I covered this earlier—in the 2015-16 budget there was \$23.6 million allocated for four years for the reinstatement of court ordered youth justice conferencing. For the 2016-17 year the estimated budget is \$7,670,000.

Mr Mackie: I just thought I would add to the Attorney's remarks there. There are currently only 10 young people in that position, so that would be the fairly small cost in the context of now.

Mr WALKER: Director-General, what programs or initiatives does the government have in place to address the statistic released late last year by the Childrens Court president that 10 per cent of juvenile offenders were responsible for 45 per cent of all proven offences in Queensland?

Mr Mackie: I thank the member for the question. I can remember some of those comments. Obviously, we have lots of initiatives in place, through the youth justice reforms that have just come through now, to try to address youth behaviour. It is a smaller cohort, and we agree with that. It is not all youth. There is not a crime rate across youths across Queensland but rather a smaller cohort of people who are continually doing that.

The reform in the youth justice policy that has come through hopefully is doing some good in that space around the youth justice conferencing. The Attorney has mentioned before a number of programs such as Transition to Success, which is trying to get behavioural changes in kids who are at risk or who have been through detention by looking at the causal factors that have probably driven them there in the first place—things like unemployment, substance abuse et cetera.

CHAIR: We will now go to government members.

Mr Mackie: Chair, can I seek leave to respond to a question on notice I took earlier?

CHAIR: Of course you can.

Mr Mackie: It was the member for Kawana who asked me about the extra two pages that we have put on a form as part of the Property Occupations Act—form 6. I can report back to the committee that those two extra pages to make it six has been around since December 2014. It was reduced by the former government by two pages, and that was part of the reducing red tape reforms at the time. Then we got further feedback from the industry including the Queensland Law Society and stakeholders within the property industry, and they wanted some of that information put back in on the basis that it was helping them get greater clarity around the types of appointments that the form is making to ensure that there is integrity in the appointment process and that there are some greater protections around agency consumers. It has been around since 2014, but it was driven by the industry wanting it back in.

CHAIR: Attorney, can I take you to page 12 of the SDS in regard to the Palaszczuk government's commitment to strategically targeting organised crime? Can the Attorney outline the benefits to our community in extending the Palaszczuk government's fight against organised crime beyond outlaw motorcycle gangs?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. The government has committed to introducing a new regime of laws to tackle serious organised crime in all of its forms. I heard questions put to the chair of the Crime and Corruption Commission earlier which said that the current laws were being repealed. What they failed to say was that they are not being repealed back to the previous legislation with nothing in its place. As the opposition are well aware, it is the intention of the government to bring new laws forward to introduce into the parliament this year that will tackle serious organised crime in Queensland as a whole. We have already indicated publicly that, in considering the commission of inquiry into organised crime, the task force into organised crime legislation, the 2013 suite of legislation, and the COA review and working up new legislation, we can advise that the new regime will include targeted consorting laws, new organised crime control orders and additional jail sentences with mandatory provision for serious organised crime, and we resolved to ensure that the outlaw motorcycle clubs remain closed and that the wearing of outlaw motorcycle gang colours in licensed premises is to remain banned.

There were many other elements and recommendations within the task force report that I am currently working through, and as a government we are working through, which will form part of the new legislation. What is important to understand is that the current legislation will remain in place until such time as the new legislation takes effect and that there will be transition provisions within that new legislation to ensure that there is seamless transition to the new laws.

I do want to say this, however. We can talk, and there has been a lot of talk, about outlaw motorcycle gangs, but they form one per cent of the crime in the state. Of course it is important that our Police Service and the Crime and Corruption Commission are tackling this form of crime. We will do so within these laws. Equally, it is about time that we start talking about the other elements of organised crime—that we start talking about child exploitation material. Let's not soften this. When we talk about child exploitation material, we are talking about sexual assault. We are talking about rape against a child, not just 10, 12 or 14 year olds; we are talking babies and toddlers. That is what I have to read. That is what we know is happening. Right now as we sit here having this hearing there are people in our own communities in our suburbs looking at material on their computer of a child being molested. That is a reality. It is happening all over this state. It is happening nationally and it is happening internationally. We need to do everything we can to deal with that because it is widespread.

We should not think that someone looking at and downloading child exploitation material is a victimless crime, because that is a real kid. That is someone's child. Those parents might not know that image exists or that child was ever molested, but the fact is they were, and every time that image is downloaded and shared they are re-victimising that child. We also know that, if people are getting gratification from looking at that material, they may very well move on to using the internet and social media to start grooming and then may personally offend against a child as well.

We need to be talking about these crimes. We need to be talking about financial crime, the boiler room frauds. It is mums and dads, uneducated and highly educated professionals who are getting caught up with these. There are retirees and pensioners who are losing their life savings. Their marriages fall apart. They could lose their homes. When we talk about child exploitation material and financial crimes, we are talking about mental health issues and addictions and, in the worst case scenario, we see people taking their lives because they are victims of these offences. When we talk about organised crime and when we talk about the sorts of laws that we want to bring in, this is why I keep saying that this government is committed to bringing in laws to tackle serious organised crime in this state in all of its forms. We cannot just be talking about outlaw motorcycle gangs. That is not enough. There are many victims, and it is about time we talk about those other victims as well.

Mrs MILLER: As we know, justices of the peace do a great job in our community. They are an intricate part of the justice system. What I was wondering was whether there would be any opportunity for justices of the peace (qualified) to be upgraded to justices of the peace (Magistrates Court). I am not talking about clerks of the court or people within the justice system but people who are JPs in the community.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. The member may be aware that we do have justices of the peace actually operating within QCAT now and doing so very successfully, both legally qualified and nonlegally qualified justices of the peace doing that work. We have budgeted in this budget to ensure that we now embed that as business as usual in the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal, so those JPs will be permanent. The KPMG report noted that it was not necessarily a financial saving in that respect but it creates a benefit to the community. It does create a financial saving in the sense that if we stopped it one of two things is going to happen—we are going to see slower clearance rates of matters because existing members have to pick up all of those minor civil matters or, alternatively, we put more senior members on QCAT to deal with those minor civil matters. It certainly was sensible to turn that JP QCAT trial into a permanent arrangement and embed it as business as usual in QCAT, and I am very pleased to do that.

As far as the Magistrates Court is concerned, I would have to turn my mind to that. Certainly that is something we can have discussions with the Chief Magistrate about to look at what other ways we can engage with our JPs. I certainly could not sit here today and say that is something that we would definitely do, but we are very pleased with the way that this has operated in QCAT.

Mr BROWN: Attorney-General, I refer you to page 61 of the SDS regarding the increases in government funding. Why is Legal Aid Queensland increasing preferred supplier fees from 2016-17?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. Legal Aid Queensland relies on a large network of business partner private law firms and in-house lawyers to ensure the delivery of its services throughout the state. As you would appreciate, Legal Aid Queensland delivers a significant number of services to the community and those most vulnerable in the community. They cannot do it all personally. If they did, it would mean Legal Aid itself as far as its number of staff is concerned would be much greater. What it does is it partners with a whole lot of private law firms out there through its large network—that is certainly a positive thing—to ensure that delivery occurs. Currently, Legal Aid has contractual arrangements with over 350 preferred supplier firms. Almost 80 per cent of legal representation services are provided by a statewide network of private lawyers. Duty lawyer services are provided by a mix of in-house lawyers and private law firms.

Without the support of preferred suppliers, Legal Aid Queensland, as I said, would be unable to provide these legal needs for Queensland themselves. In 2015-16, Legal Aid Queensland experienced a significant increase in demand for its criminal law services throughout the state where there was an expansion, as we have talked about much today, in domestic and family violence duty lawyer services and the continued impact in the magistrates courts of the Moynihan reforms. These factors have increased workloads and complexities associated with delivering legal assistance throughout the state and are anticipated to continue. Despite these factors, Legal Aid Queensland continues to attract and maintain an extensive preferred supplier network.

It is important, however, to ensure that sufficient numbers of experienced qualified preferred suppliers are maintained and available to deliver Legal Aid Queensland services, so modest increases in fees occur from time to time. Legal Aid has implemented a number of targeted fee increases in critical service delivery areas including for duty lawyer services in crime, domestic and family violence and child protection, and for regional accommodation and travel fees. These increases were achieved within the Legal Aid Queensland existing level of funding. When we talk about fees, we are not talking about Legal Aid charging them. We are talking about Legal Aid paying increased fees to these private law

firms so they can retain the work and the expertise. If those firms cannot be adequately funded to keep providing these services, they are likely to reduce the number of services they will provide through Legal Aid Queensland.

Legal Aid Queensland of course is very pleased that the Queensland government has provided \$329,000 in funding for the 2016-17 financial year and ongoing funding to allow Legal Aid to increase the preferred supplier fees in line with CPI on an annual basis. That is all it is—it is a CPI increase which is reasonable when we are talking about making sure that the most vulnerable in our community are getting legal support.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I refer to page 10 of the SDS regarding note 15 on the implementation of the online birth registration and ask you to please outline what this initiative is and how it has impacted favourably on service delivery time frames.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. Released in September 2015, the online birth registration initiative is an important step forward for life event registration in Queensland. This initiative is the first completely online service of its kind in the country. It leverages the Commonwealth government's document verification system to electronically verify identity documents and allows Queensland parents to complete, sign and submit their child's birth registration at a time and location most convenient to them. The system uses hospital information and data-matching protocols to validate information provided by parents and to mitigate the risk of identity fraud. In addition to the convenience it provides for busy parents, the electronic processes have also significantly reduced the time taken to administer birth registrations and improve data quality by removing manual data entry. The annual processing time for birth registration prior to the introduction of the online service was 7½ days. As of 30 June this year, the average processing time has been reduced to 4.9 days.

Ms PEASE: Well done. Further to that line of questioning, I refer to page 5 of the SDS regarding the operations of the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. I am wondering if you could provide some information about what are the most popular baby names registered in 2016-17 for the financial year.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for her question. Sadly, Yvette is not one of them, but I can say that we do see a trend from time to time in relation to children's names. As we know, one of the times of greatest happiness to families is often the arrival of a new child, so the names are very important. In the first six months of 2016 the most popular names for girls in Queensland were Charlotte, Mia and Ava. Charlotte reigns supreme having also topped the most popular list in 2015. Mia and Ava have both risen in popularity, rising into the top three at the expense of Olivia and Ava. When it comes to boys, Queenslanders are much more consistent in their choices. The most popular names so far this year are Oliver, William and Jack, just as they were in 2015. There is a smile down the end there.

Ms PEASE: Congratulations, Jann. She has a grandson named Jack.

Mrs STUCKEY: My new grandson.

Mrs D'ATH: We see interesting variations in choices across the state. Evie is the most popular girl's name on Brisbane's bayside while in Rockhampton the favourite name is Sophie. Tyler is the most popular boy's name in the state's outback, but perhaps surprisingly Jonathan, which we thought might get more of a run in North Queensland this year, does not even make the top 10 in Townsville. As I say, I suspect that Yvette is not even in the top 100 and is not likely to be anytime soon.

CHAIR: What about Theo? I know the member for Beaudesert has recently had a boy. I wonder where that sits on the list.

Mrs D'ATH: I would have to check where Theo sits on the list.

Mr KRAUSE: It is very popular in Beaudesert.

Mrs D'ATH: It is very popular in Beaudesert, I am sure.

CHAIR: On that note I will go to the member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: I will have something a bit more to the point, Mr Chair. I refer to page 4 of the SDS in relation to the Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry. The context of my questions is a reported statement of Mr Byrne in the *Australian* on 1 May last year. The report states—

While whistleblowers and victims of organised crime can apply to give evidence anonymously or in private, the commissioner insisted he wanted the work of the inquiry to be open and transparent, with most hearings to be held in public.

Attorney, why was there no public consultation and public hearings as part of this process?

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for his question. As the member knows, I have answered this on a number of occasions including questions in the parliament. The decision to release any information or hold public hearings was the decision of the commissioner. I assume we are talking about the commission of inquiry now, or is it the task force?

Mr WALKER: We are talking about the commission of inquiry.

Mrs D'ATH: The commission of inquiry into organised crime. This was a decision of Commissioner Byrne in considering how he progresses it. He has made public statements, I believe, that there were a lot of confidential matters and a lot of confidential submissions made to him. Considering the complexity and the seriousness of the matters that were coming before him in this inquiry, he chose to make the decision not to release it. This was not a decision of the government. The government cannot answer for the commissioner, nor should we. We were not going to in any way interfere with the commission of inquiry into organised crime. It was done independently, and those were decisions made by the commissioner at the time.

Mr WALKER: Were there any discussions between the commissioner and you or your department in relation to that decision before it was made?

Mrs D'ATH: No. The terms of reference were given and there were no further discussions between my office and the commissioner in relation to how the commission of inquiry should be conducted. That was a decision for the commissioner.

Mr WALKER: Was resourcing an issue in that decision, to your knowledge?

Mrs D'ATH: No, not at all. In fact, the commission of inquiry into organised crime came in under budget which, as we heard today, resulted in the remaining funds being reallocated to the Queensland Police Service, and the Queensland Police Service then allocated a proportion of that to the Crime and Corruption Commission to deal with child exploitation.

Mr WALKER: The commission, in fact, came in significantly under budget—about half. Does that—

Mrs D'ATH: No, I do not believe that was accurate. I do not think it was half. I am happy to get those figures for you.

Mr WALKER: In relation to coming in significantly under—I think that is still an appropriate word—was that because it was the expectation there would be public hearings and then there were none?

Mrs D'ATH: We allocated the budget based on the standard budget that has been allocated to commissions of inquiry over a number of years. In recent history in general for a commission of inquiry that is allocated a six-month time frame, the general budget has been around \$5 million. That was allocated to the commission of inquiry. That was the basis. It was not broken down to an expectation of how many hearings or anything like that. That is quite honestly the standard budget that has over recent years been allocated for commissions of inquiry over that time frame.

Mr WALKER: I refer you to page 4 of the SDS in relation to the Taskforce on Organised Crime Legislation. In your answer to question on notice 4 you advise that the task force cost \$790,000. As you know, the opposition's view of it was that it was a closed-shop inquiry with a predetermined outcome to repeal the laws. Do you believe that the \$790,000 was money well spent?

Mrs D'ATH: I absolutely believe it was money well spent. It was a comprehensive process of a task force made up of a number of people with expertise across the legal and policing sector who had very diverse views. It was very deliberate to have the Law Society, the Public Interest Monitor, the police officers union, the Police Service and departmental agencies all around the table together looking at these laws.

As the member is aware, these laws were rushed into parliament, were pushed through overnight and had no parliamentary committee scrutiny. There was no opportunity to have any public input whatsoever into these laws. I believe and the government believes it was extremely important to not just have a single commissioner look at these laws and look at what works, what does not and what we can do better but, importantly, have a group of people from a range of backgrounds with a range of expertise to come together and look over that entire suite of legislation to ask what we can do better and how we can make sure we have strong and robust laws not just operationally for the police but also legally, in our courts?

Mr WALKER: You say that the task force looked at what works, what does not and what we can do better. That was not what the task force was asked to look into at all. The task force was asked to look at and recommend repealing the laws.

Mrs D'ATH: I know that the member for Mansfield likes to cherrypick words out of the terms of reference—

Mr WALKER: It was the first term of reference.

Mrs D'ATH:—but the reality is that the terms of reference, as the member well knows, go on to state that any decisions as to whether there be a repeal, replacement, proposed amendments or anything else are within the scope of the task force. They had no limitations as to what they were to consider, and that was very clear. You only need to read the first page of the task force—I stand to be corrected, but I think it is the first page—to see that the chair of the task force specifically states that they did not believe they were in any way constrained by the term 'repeal' in the terms of reference to make a recommendation that they must repeal legislation. They have said that themselves. Any insinuation by the LNP that they were limited, that they were told they must repeal—the task force themselves have refuted that in their own task force report.

Mr WALKER: The terms of reference say it quite clearly. Attorney, you were talking about the composition of the task force, and I want to get on to that. When you decided who of all those people were to be represented, why were victims of crime not represented on the task force?

Mrs D'ATH: As you would appreciate, it would not have been appropriate to try to organise every possible interest group and stakeholder to form part of that task force. Then there would be too many people sitting around a room trying to work through this legislation. We knew that for those who were not forming part of the task force there was the opportunity for the task force to further consult with other organisations and other individuals. Of course, any organisation, including victim assist organisations, had the opportunity to put submissions directly to the task force expressing their views on any of their concerns or opinions or support for the current legislation.

Mr WALKER: On the same issue, why did you decide that the Crime and Corruption Commission, which has, as we heard, very important and salient views on this issue, would not be represented on the task force?

Mrs D'ATH: We believed that the Crime and Corruption Commission was best placed to put submissions to the task force, as opposed to being a member of the task force, in considering that suite of legislation. As I say, we made sure that we got the balance right as far as task force members are concerned but did not try to ensure that we had every stakeholder on that task force because we needed to make sure it was manageable to go forward. We believe that the representation we had on the task force was certainly good, broad representation and expertise to get the job done. As we all know and were all well aware of, the Crime and Corruption Commission had every opportunity—and did take those opportunities—to put submissions to the task force, and their submissions have certainly been taken into account. As you read through the task force report you can see that the CCC has certainly had plenty of input into these laws and the task force report.

Criticising who is and is not on the task force is just a little bit rich from a member who was part of a government that had no task force, no public consultation—no consultation at all—but just threw together some legislation which made comprehensive, fundamental changes to our criminal legislation and rammed it through overnight. You can criticise our task force membership, but I will take our task force membership and our consultation process over the LNP's process on these laws any day.

Mr WALKER: Unsurprisingly, the task force recommended that the laws be repealed. We do not yet know what you are putting in place in lieu. Can you guarantee that whatever goes in its place will not result in the reopening of criminal motorcycle gangs' clubhouses?

Mrs D'ATH: We have already given a commitment that any new offences we create or provisions we create will include the shutting of any outlaw motorcycle gang clubhouses. It is about keeping closed the existing clubhouses. We have already said that; we are on the public record as saying that. We are looking at the recommendations from the task force in relation to some of the legal mechanisms for example that New South Wales uses to do that. That is our aim.

Mr WALKER: Let me get that quite clear: your position will be that those clubhouses will not reopen under your laws?

Mrs D'ATH: We seek to have those clubhouses remain closed.

Mr WALKER: Attorney, if I can just go back to the youth justice issues that we were referring to in the last batch of the non-government—

CHAIR: Two minutes, member for Mansfield.

Mr WALKER: What measures or goals is the government setting itself to reduce youth crime and reduce recidivism rates? I am talking particularly about measures and goals so we can know whether you have succeeded in the changes that you have made or whether you have not.

Mrs D'ATH: I thank the member for the question. We are currently developing a whole-of-government youth justice strategy. As the member appreciates, I do not know if there are too many governments that have set themselves fixed targets on reducing crime. It is important that we do everything possible to reduce the number of youth who are offending and, importantly, recidivism. As the member pointed out earlier, what we do know is that it is a small cohort of those in the youth justice system who are actually undertaking the majority or a large proportion of the crimes. We know that as a fact and that is what the evidence shows us. What that also tells us is that if we work with that small cohort we can make a significant difference. If we can work with that 10 per cent, we could potentially reduce crime by 45 per cent. That is what the figures correlate to. We are doing just that.

I will talk about the broader strategies. Of course, I mentioned earlier that Skilling Queenslanders for Work has a specific program in it for youth skills which is dedicated to kids in the youth justice system to get them back into school, into further training or into education. That is one initiative. I have already talked about transition to success as another one that is showing very good early signs or outcomes. The other day I attended a graduation of young people who undertook a certificate II in business along with a lot of other training and support. All 11 who commenced completed and that is a great outcome. Every single one of them completed that.

On that 10 per cent—and I touched on it very briefly with the member for Bundamba earlier—there is intensive case management. Youth Justice is acknowledging that up to 80 per cent of the young people who are in that 10 per cent category can be expected to continue to offend into adulthood if there is no change to the current intervention model. In terms of the complex needs experienced by this cohort of vulnerable people whom we are targeting through an intensive case management trial, approximately \$150,000 per annum was allocated to a trial in Caboolture targeting 15 young people and their families per year. I know that I am running short of time, so I am happy to potentially come back to this. I can advise the member that this is working directly with those 15 young people and their families. As we know, if you are just dealing with the young person and not their families, you are not going to get the outcomes. It is an intensive program working with the families with one-on-one support, 36 hours per week—a whole range of initiatives. I am happy to go through it further, but it is about having that intensive case management to support it.

Can I quickly answer an earlier question? So far in 2016 Theo is No. 24 on the list.

Mr WALKER: With a bullet!

CHAIR: I understand, Attorney, you may have some documents you are seeking leave to table?

Mrs D'ATH: I advise that in relation to two questions on notice from the Electoral Commission of Queensland I have responses that I can table.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mrs D'ATH: There is one other document to table. I have only one copy of this. That is the list I referred to earlier in relation to a list that Clubs Queensland has provided of clubs that have supported and merged with other existing clubs. I am happy to table that.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. The time has now expired for consideration of the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisational units and the portfolios of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills.

Mrs D'ATH: Sorry, I have two points of clarification that have been provided to me. I would like to clarify a response I made earlier this afternoon in relation to the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation. I referred to the reduction in funding for the OLGAR arising from the reduction in the collection of liquor fees. To clarify, the small reduction in 2017-18 is a result of a fairly minor reprioritising of resources across OLGAR rather than a direct consequence of the fluctuating fee revenue that goes to the Treasury. Importantly, I can reiterate that none of these savings will come from liquor compliance activities.

I also referred to financial hardship in relation to fees for the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal and people being better off because they only had to pay \$100. Currently, the full fee would be waived, so I need to correct that. Can I finish by thanking the committee and the parliamentary staff for their hard work in this process. I also extend my thanks to my Department of Justice and Attorney-General staff and those right across the department for their ongoing work for estimates.

CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you and also the directors-general, the CEOs and other advisers for your attendance here today. I remind you that any outstanding questions which have been taken on notice today are due to be provided to the committee's research director by five o'clock on Tuesday, 26 July this year.

The committee will now have a short break. Then we will resume after 3.30 to consider the proposed expenditure of the portfolio of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services.

Proceedings suspended from 3.18 pm to 3.38 pm

ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE— POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AND CORRECTIVE SERVICES

In Attendance

Hon. WS Byrne, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Corrective Services

Ms E McIntyre, Chief of Staff

Mr A MacCracken, Principal Strategy Officer

Department of Justice and Attorney-General

Mr D Mackie, Director-General

Mr G Davis, Executive Director and Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services Branch, Corporate Services

Queensland Corrective Services

Dr M Rallings, Commissioner

Mr R Wood, Manager, Office of the Commissioner

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services

Ms K Carroll, Commissioner

Mr D Smith, Deputy Commissioner, Capability and Performance

Ms M Fisher, Acting Executive Director, Executive, Ministerial and Corporate Services

Office of Inspector-General Emergency Management

Mr I MacKenzie, Inspector-General

Queensland Police Service

Mr I Stewart, Commission

Mr B Gee, Deputy Commissioner, Regional Operations

Mr S Gollschewski, Deputy Commissioner, Specialist Operations

Mr B Pointing, Deputy Commissioner, Strategy, Policy and Performance

 **CHAIR:** The estimates hearing for the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee is resumed. I declare the proposed expenditure for the relevant organisational units within the portfolio of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Minister for Correctional Services open for examination. The question before the committee is that the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

I am Mark Furner, chair of the committee. The other members of the committee with me are: Mr Michael Crandon, deputy chair; Mr Don Brown; Mr Jon Krause; Ms Joan Pease; and Mrs Jann Stuckey. The committee has also granted leave to a number of members to attend and ask questions throughout this afternoon, and they are: Mr Tim Nicholls, Mrs Deb Frecklington, Mr Jeff Seeney, Mr Ian Walker, Mr Jared Bleijie, Mr Tim Mander and Mrs Jo-Ann Miller. On that note I wish to inform the committee and those present that the member for Bundamba has sought leave to attend estimates but has been advised that, as the former police minister, it would be prudent for her not to attend. This advice is from the Clerk of Parliament. Finally, the other member granted leave is Mr Robert Katter.

The hearing program for today has been published and is available from secretariat staff. I remind all those participating in the hearing that these proceedings are similar to parliament in that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard I remind all present that, under the standing orders, any person may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised the hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the conditions of the broadcast of proceedings are available from secretariat staff. I ask that all mobile phones or pagers be switched off or to silent mode. For the benefit of Hansard I ask all witnesses to identify themselves before answering a question.

We will focus firstly on the proposed expenditure in the Correctional Services portfolio, then Fire and Emergency Services, and after a short break we will return to deal with the Police Service. Minister, I invite you to commence with an opening statement,

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair. Today I have with me Mr David Mackie, the Director-General of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; Dr Mark Rallings, the Commissioner of Queensland Corrective Services; and Mr Garry Davis, Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Chief Financial Officer.

When it came into government, the Palaszczuk government knew that a lot of work needed to be done to undo the damage that had been inflicted by the former government. The current state of our prisons is, frankly, symptomatic of a primordial assault on the justice system that occurred during the Newman era. The former Liberal National Party government demonstrated how easy it is to significantly compromise a system, and unfortunately it is much harder to stabilise subsequently; however, the Palaszczuk Labor government is working hard to repair the damage done by the then government.

We have moved to address overcrowding in Queensland correctional centres through a number of initiatives in the state budget and at the same time have committed to keeping a tight rein on sexual offenders. We have committed to spending an additional \$88.5 million over five years to remediate hanging points from all older style secure cells and implement other measures to reduce the risk of prisoner suicide at Borallon Training and Correctional Centre. This is expected to allow the remaining 244 cells to be opened at Borallon in addition to the 248 cells already re-opened to address the growing demand in the system. This budget also sees \$1 million allocated for a business case for a 328-cell expansion of the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre as well as a review and update of business cases for infrastructure projects at the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre near Gatton and the Capricornia Correctional Centre near Rockhampton.

This budget responds to the increasing demands on our probation and parole offices by providing additional funding of \$20.5 million over two years to support the increased operations of the Probation and Parole Service and the Queensland parole boards. Keeping our communities safe is a commitment the Palaszczuk Labor government takes very seriously. This is why in our 2016 budget we allocate \$5.1 million over four years and ongoing funding of \$1.3 million a year for Queensland Corrective Services to update the modern technology already used to electronically monitor dangerous prisoners—sexual offenders—and implement the geographic information system that goes with that. The government is also committed to additional funding of \$10.3 million over four years and \$2.6 million a year ongoing to continue to expand and specialise statewide delivery of sexual offender treatment programs.

Thanks to our predecessors we have a long road ahead to get our prisons back in good shape; however, this budget goes some way to getting corrections where it needs to be.

CHAIR: As agreed by the committee this morning we will be doing questions in block, so 15 minutes of non-government questions and then government. As agreed, we decided to commence with the government in this session today.

Minister, referring to page 73 of Budget Paper No. 3 regarding the Borallon Training and Correctional Centre, could you explain to the committee the progress report on the recommissioning of Borallon and how it will ease the pressure on prison numbers in Queensland prisons and enhance prisoner safety.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. As the member rightly points out, the Palaszczuk Labor government is in the process of essentially opening a new prison. The former government opened no new prisons. Following a safety audit the government decided to stage the recommissioning of Borallon, with the cells coming online as safer cell measures are implemented. The former government had no safer cell measures planned whatsoever. When completed, I am advised that Borallon will hold 492 prisoners. Under the Palaszczuk government the new Borallon will be a tough, but efficient, earning and learning facility. The programs provided are squarely aimed at reducing the risk of re-offending through education, training and employment. Our government is committed to reducing the risk of reoffending through the productive use of prison time. This approach has the dual benefits of: firstly, improving community safety; and secondly, reducing pressure on our prisons through a reduction in the high number of prisoners who return to prison. Following that safety audit the government decided on a staged re-opening of Borallon. I am advised that the total capital cost is in the order of \$126.9 million.

On 11 April Borallon was recommissioned, with 95 beds opening. Between 3 May and 30 June, 153 secure cells came online—and those are online as we speak—upgraded with safe cell modifications. That was at a cost of \$1.39 million. From February 2017 the detention unit will be upgraded at a cost of \$13.41 million, and from 2017-18 the remaining 244 secure cells, upgraded at a cost of \$55.6 million, will be online. The total operating cost of staging recommissioning over three years is \$91.5 million.

Other compensating initiatives are that the safer cells will dramatically reduce the risk of prisoner suicide. That was a decision made by government on the recommissioning of Borallon. The TAFE campus has commenced on site, with 32 prisoners already receiving that training. The earning and learning will assist with their post-prison employment—and that is our intention—and so, too, will a range of other measures. The wraparound of mental health services, psychological interventions, health assessments and support programs are there to assist them transition back to the community.

We on our side of the parliament are determined to do everything we can to reduce reoffending. While there is no doubt that it will be tough, Borallon will be a thoroughly modern prison. We will not follow the 'lock 'em up and throw away the key' approach of the former government because we know that it does not work and there are record returns to prison as a result of that. We will not release prisoners into communities without doing everything possible to rehabilitate them, and the fact is that most prisoners do leave prison eventually. We are doing everything possible not to expose our staff—that is, members of the Queensland Public Service—to the dreadful sight of prisoners self-harming in their cells.

Mr BROWN: With reference to the SDS at page 18 and the additional funding of \$20½ million for Probation and Parole services and the Queensland parole boards, will the minister please advise the committee in what ways this will contribute to the safety of the Queensland community?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. Queensland Corrective Services supervises more than 19,500 offenders across a large number of regions, 34 districts and 134 reporting centres. Effective case management of offenders by Probation and Parole sees their rehabilitation continue while under strict supervision of the state. The Palaszczuk government, unlike the former government, knows and appreciates the value to the community of rehabilitation. That is why this government has allocated \$20.5 million to the Probation and Parole service over the next two years, to make sure these valuable Queensland public servants are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible. We will increase the number of Probation and Parole officers. We will increase the advisory services to the courts, including the specialist courts re-established by this government as alluded to earlier by the Attorney-General after they were fundamentally abandoned by the previous government in order to give the appearance of looking tough on crime. We will establish a High Risk Offender Management Unit in Townsville to supervise offenders under the Dangerous Prisoners (Sexual Offenders) Act. All of these measures are aimed at maximising the supervision of offenders on community based orders, ensuring cancellation and suspension of parole is timely, and making sure our communities are places in which we are all safe and doing all that we can to see offenders do not reoffend.

Ms PEASE: I refer to page 18 and the role performed by the parole boards across Queensland. Could the minister please advise the committee on any measures taken to ensure that the parole boards continue to remain contemporary and reflect community diversity and expectations?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. Queensland parole boards are independent statutory bodies, with members appointed by the Governor in Council. As minister I am responsible for providing guidelines to the president of parole boards. The guidelines clearly state the expectation that community safety is the paramount consideration when considering if an offender should be released on parole. Today I can announce the appointment of new appointees to Queensland regional parole boards. Among the 23 applicants chosen from a pool of 200 are 20 new appointees and three reappointments. They have been appointed as a result of a very open process that has been more rigorous than ever before. They came from diverse backgrounds, with a range of professional and personal experiences from right across Queensland.

A selection panel was formed comprising the president of the parole boards and two external community representatives—a university professor and a councillor from regional Queensland. Short-listing and assessing applicants for appointment was extremely thorough. In previous years appointments to the regional parole boards had been at the discretion of the minister. In the past no consistent process was used to identify suitable candidates. Transparency and accountability are well-known hallmarks of the Palaszczuk government. I instructed that an independent desktop review

take place to ensure the integrity and transparency of this appointment process. The review has resulted in the appointment of 23 applicants. I look forward to welcoming the new members to such an important statutory body in Queensland.

Queensland parole boards deal with matters concerning prisoners sentenced to eight years of imprisonment or more, interstate parole transfers into Queensland and overseas travel applications. The Central and Northern Queensland Regional Parole Board and the Southern Queensland Regional Parole Board hear all other matters, including breaches of court ordered parole. All Queensland parole boards consider interstate travel applications for periods in excess of seven days.

CHAIR: While still on page 18, I take you to the custodial services provided by QCS. Will the minister please update the committee on work camps and their operation across Queensland?

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair, for the question. The QCS work camp program is a long-serving and successful rehabilitation scheme introduced by a former Labor government. The work camps were founded as part of an emergency response effort to help the people of Charleville clean up and rebuild their community after the devastating floods of 1990. Work camp projects are determined by community advisory committees, which are made up of local community members. They accommodate low-risk prisoners. Today the QCS Work Program continues to provide assistance to communities that have been devastated by floods, storms or other natural disasters. The Work Program provides regional communities with a valuable source of labour, as the projects are unique to their location and community needs. Work camps in many cases fill labour shortages in regional areas and prisoners undertake projects that the local council or not-for-profit organisations would otherwise be unable to complete or afford.

There are currently 13 work camps that operate throughout Queensland of which 11 are for male prisoners and two are for female prisoners. Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre manages Warwick women's work camp; Capricornia Correctional Centre manages men's work camps at Springsure, Clermont and Blackall; Palen Creek Correctional Centre manages the Mitchell, Charleville, Dirranbandi and St George work camps; Lotus Glen Correctional Centre manages the work camp at Innisfail; and Townsville Correctional Centre manages four camps, at Boulia, Julia Creek, Winton and a women's work camp at Bowen. Prisoners are assessed against a number of criteria before they can be placed in a work camp. They are placed in low security before they are able to move to a work camp. Work carried out by the prisoners includes maintaining fences, cemeteries, playgrounds and showgrounds and ongoing general maintenance projects in regional communities.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 19 of the SDS and the utilisation of low-security facilities, which is below the 2015-16 target. Will the minister advise the committee the number of prisoners held in low-security facilities and the criteria that is applied to assess a prisoner's suitability for placement in low-security facilities?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. Low-security facilities include work camps, which I have just described, where prisoners do community service for regional Queensland communities. Low security is about reintegrating prisoners gradually from high security. The gradual reintegration of a carefully rehabilitated prisoner is the best possible way to ensure prisoners do not reoffend. Prisoners are carefully assessed for placement and prisoners considered dangerous are not suitable. Prisoners are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Strict criteria apply to the assessment process, those being the nature of their offences; the risk of escape; institutional behaviour; intelligence information; support requirements; intervention needs; legal status, including remand, extradition or deportation issues; proximity to full time or parole release; and risk of reoffending. The key statistics are that, as at 30 June 2016, of the 7,721 prisoners there were 634 prisoners in low security. This equates to eight per cent of prisoners. There are 807 beds in low security, 12 per cent of the state's built capacity.

Ms PEASE: Minister, with reference to the SDS at page 18, could you please provide the committee with an overview of the regional initiatives to ensure prisoners make reparations to our communities?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. Community service allows offenders and low-security prisoners to make reparation to the community. QCS works with not-for-profit organisations and local councils to supervise offenders. Community service can be court ordered community service orders, fine option orders or intensive corrections orders. They can be completed by low-security prisoners at work camps or from low-security prisons. Court ordered community service work is conducted by offenders who report to all Probation and Parole district offices across

Queensland. In 2015-16, as at 30 April 2016 a total of 291,261 hours of community service—court ordered—was completed, equating to a value of approximately \$6.9 million. In 2015-16, \$0.89 million was allocated to the supervision of offenders sentenced to community service for alcohol fuelled violence offences whilst \$0.91 million was allocated in 2016-17.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Everton next.

Mr MANDER: Good afternoon, Minister. I refer to page 19 of the SDS in relation to facility utilisation. Minister, on your watch, overcrowding in prisons has increased by almost eight per cent across all facilities and almost nine per cent in high-security facilities in the last 12 months. Why has the government allowed this to occur?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. I suppose I am not alarmed or surprised that that would be the first question the Liberal National Party asked, so it is important to understand how we have arrived at this situation. The truth is that it was very much the influence of the previous Liberal National Party government that placed the system in the position it is. As I alluded to in my opening statement, the increase in prison numbers during the period of the Liberal National Party was in the order of 25 per cent plus. That trajectory was well known to the Liberal National Party during their period of government. The Murri Court and all of the diversionary programs at the front-end load were torn away. All of the support for reintegration programs including low-security issues was torn away. That trajectory has been consistent since virtually the day that the Liberal National Party took control of the state's corrections system, and what we saw during that period was—

Mr MANDER: What—two years and nine months?

Mr BYRNE: What was the plan that was put in place? What we saw was a Liberal National Party that was endeavouring to privatise the prison system. The only plan that the Liberal National Party had was to privatise and that was reported back in February 2013—'... Government has a secret plan to privatise all prisons statewide.' That is a matter of public record. What was going on with the Liberal National Party was, as I said, an assault on the justice system: mandatory sentencing, a near on 30 per cent increase during their time in government, tear down the Murri Court, tear down all the diversionary programs, tear down anything at the front end of the system that could possibly assist in diverting people from becoming completely, utterly and permanently institutionalised. At the back end—

Mr MANDER: Minister, you take no responsibility?

Mr BYRNE: Of course I take responsibility.

Mr MANDER: For the overcrowding?

Mr BYRNE: I have already mapped out how we are re-investing in that program, but on this central issue here of the prisons carrying additional capacity, we put in place quite specific measures. You will see the recruitment of additional staff. There are plans in place within the corrections system where the wellbeing of our staff is well identified. We are investing in a substantial increase in corrections officers to make sure that the operating environment is safe.

When it comes to the doubling up in cells, which is an inevitable consequence of this situation that we have inherited, I have no particular problem with the idea that two prisoners share a cell. I am a fellow who comes from a background of spending half their life living in a hole wrapped in a space blanket. I am not concerned about the comfort issues—that the perception may be out there. My advice—

Mr MANDER: What do the experts say about that?

Mr BYRNE: My advice to people contemplating criminal action is, 'If you don't want to do the time, don't do the crime.' It is quite simple. A doubling up in cells of itself is not a matter of high concern to me. What is a matter of high concern to me is the rate of incarceration and the numbers. We have laid out our intentions in terms of the capital program. If the member is alluding to the problem by saying, 'Just build more problems,' if that is the solution, even if the decision were made tomorrow morning that we were going to build prisons at the projected rates of accommodation that will be required, we are looking at a multibillion dollar investment. If the decision were made tomorrow, we would not see a facility mature for the next three years. If that is where this discussion is going—'Let's us just build our way out of this problem'—we would not see a result mature for three years. I am very confident that we have measures in place that are going to secure the wellbeing of our corrections officers. We have many systems and more staff in place to do that and we are progressively enhancing the capacity of our systems as they currently rest.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Minister. On that note, I refer to an article in the *Sunday Mail* of May. I seek leave to table this document.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: Minister, the quote there is that the QCS is prioritising resources for 'diversion, community supervision and re-entry services'. Could you explain what that means?

Mr BYRNE: I can explain to you that we are investing. I have just explained the budget lines about how we are investing in probation and parole services. I do not necessarily take what is published in the paper as being a substantive source of accurate information.

Mr MANDER: I think it is a quote from the QCS, Minister.

Mr BYRNE: What I can say is that you can see by the measures that were talked about previously by the Attorney-General that we are doing things at the front end of the system. While it is outside my portfolio, I was present with the Attorney-General at the launch of the Murri Court, which was very warmly and widely received as a great reintroduction of a system that works.

We are doing a number of things, as we committed to do, at the front end of the justice system more broadly and at the back end you can see the investments that we have made in parole and supervisory processes. Borallon is being recommissioned as a training and learning prison, not as a bulk warehouse, as was the intention of the previous government. I think we can demonstrate quite clearly that we have recognised the problem and we are taking prudent steps to, over time, alleviate the pressure in the system.

Mr MANDER: Does this statement not simply mean you are going to let people out early or not put people in prison who deserve to be there in the first place?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Everton for the question. Is that fishing for the six o'clock sound bite?

Mr MANDER: We have lost that one. We are not worried about that. I am worried about what it means. You have not explained it.

Mr BYRNE: There is absolutely no evidence that would support that sort of extraneous assertion. It is complete nonsense. I reject the inference of the question in the first place.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I refer to page 18 of the SDS in relation to Corrective Services, and I ask: in light of this obvious overcrowding that you have admitted we have, why is the government spending \$1 million on business cases for expanding the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre and reviewing business cases for expansions at the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre and the Capricornia Correctional Centre when the need for additional capacity is quite obvious? Why are we wasting money on a business case?

Mr BYRNE: We are not wasting money at all. We are refreshing business cases that exist. As the government moves forward, we need to have modern, contemporary options before the government. There is nothing untoward about refreshing business cases. That refresh is something that we consider to be necessary in order to provide the government—

Mr MANDER: But a \$1 million worth of expenditure?

Mr BYRNE: Business cases cost money and we are transparent about it. We need an updated current suite of options to give the government choices. I make no apologies for any of that. That is what prudent governments do.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Minister. Minister, in May this year, staff at five prisoners were on strike as the government was struggling to deal with this prisoner overcrowding issue. In your meetings with the relevant unions, what issues did they raise with you?

Mr BYRNE: The content of my meetings with the unions is confidential between myself and the union representatives, but the difference between, I suppose, my approach in engaging with employees is that I do so in good faith. I have always been willing to speak to employee representatives, because I think that is a prudent thing to do. That is in many ways in marked contrast to the way in which the previous government dealt with their employees.

Mr MANDER: Minister, you said the government is transparent.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, allow the minister to answer your question, please.

Mr BYRNE: There are many matters that are discussed between government officials and employee representatives. I note that the member himself had recent meetings with union representatives. I am not sure that he would ever want to go on the public record to reveal his meetings with various union and group officials. Naturally, those matters are confidential, but none are in such a fashion to believe that there is some secret agenda here. Those meetings discuss the sorts of matters that you expect employee representatives to discuss with a minister of the Crown. It is as simple as that.

Mr MANDER: I simply want to know the issues that are concerning employees of correctional service centres. Being transparent, as you claim that you are, surely you can you tell us the issues that the employees are concerned about?

Mr BYRNE: Those matters are entirely between myself and the employee representatives. I would suggest to the member that, if you want to know what the issues are, meet with the employer representatives yourself.

Mr MANDER: Let us talk on that point, knowing how close your government and the unions are. I just want to refer to comments you made in parliament—

CHAIR: You can withdraw that. That is out of order.

Mr MANDER: I withdraw. I refer to comments made in parliament by the minister on 17 June. I seek leave to table that document. I assume it is approved.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted. I will wait for the minister to get a copy.

Mr MANDER: I refer to that request that I made to meet with the Together union. Can you confirm that the Together union consulted you about my request to meet with them?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, can I get some—

Mr MANDER: This is page 19 of the SDS.

CHAIR: But the document that you have tabled, what is it? I can see that it is *Hansard*.

Mr MANDER: It is *Hansard*. There is a quote there, Mr Chairman, about my approach to the unions, which the minister obviously knew about within 24 hours of me making a phone call and having not received a reply from the unions themselves. The minister obviously had known about that approach. I am just asking did they consult you about my request to meet with them?

Mr BYRNE: No, they did not consult me.

Mr MANDER: How do you explain that quote in *Hansard*, where you obviously knew that I had made an approach with them?

Mr BYRNE: I had been made aware of it in some fashion. What do you mean by the word 'consult'? Did we hear that you were keen to talk to the unions?

Mr MANDER: Were they seeking permission from you to meet with me?

Mr BYRNE: Absolutely not. That is a nonsense position to take. I can assure you that union officials do not seek my imprimatur to meet with anybody.

Mr MANDER: You did not instruct them not to meet with me?

Mr BYRNE: Absolutely not.

Mr MANDER: Minister, how come you knew about that call within 24 hours of me making the request when I have not yet received a phone call from them in reply to my request?

Mr BYRNE: I cannot speak to your relationship with employee representatives. That is not a matter for me; that is a matter for yourself. All I can say is that I heard on the grapevine.

Mr MANDER: Minister, the next time you are speaking to them will you please advise them that I am still waiting for the return call and I would love to speak to them.

Mr BYRNE: Good luck.

Mr MANDER: I appreciate that. I refer to page 19 of the SDS in relation to assault rates in our prisons. I ask: Minister, in the last 12 months there has been a 265 per cent increase in prisoner-on-officer assaults, there has been a 78 per cent increase on serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and a 51 per cent increase on prisoner-on-prisoner assaults. I ask: why have you endangered the safety of Corrective Services staff by letting our prisons turn into what has been described by the *Courier-Mail* as 'fight clubs'? I seek leave to table that newspaper article.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. I think I know what he is getting to. The fact is that there is zero tolerance from this government towards violence on staff. All assaults are reported to police officers. That is the way the system operates. The prison environment can be dangerous and assaults occur. Most prisoners are respectful, but some are violent. Prisoners can be mentally ill, agitated, a risk to themselves, or fighting with other prisoners. Officers preserve security and safety. Sometimes the staff are involved in responding to prisoner incidents.

There was one serious assault on staff this last year and six in the previous year. The numbers that the shadow minister has spoken there of serious assault, this last reporting period, was one on staff, 68 assaults this year and 18 last year. That is the general assaults and that point is made.

As I have said before, we recognise the issues associated with these matters. That is why we have put in place very specific revised training and profiling of incidents to monitor hot spots in prison areas. There is a very significant de-escalation training program and situational awareness training for our staffers as we move forward. The QCS intends to implement body worn cameras as we move forward. There is a trial with a number of different types underway. The QCS hopes to use the same body cameras as the Queensland police. The importance of staff safety is well documented. The additional staff, the additional systems and additional support mechanisms are in play. All of that will go a considerable way to mitigating the potential risks that exist.

I will say this, though. I have visited quite a number of correctional facilities over the last little while—since I have become the minister. In talking to corrections officers, it is evident from their observations that a proportion of prisoners in our system are becoming increasingly violent. That was very much brought home to me by the staff at the women's prison. That trend has been evident to them over quite a number of years—well predating the term of this government and perhaps the last. There may be a much greater set of issues associated with the increasingly violent tendencies of some prisoners. Overcrowding is a very simple way of trying to explain it. While that may be a component part to it, I suspect that it is the nature of offenders who are being imprisoned these days and perhaps the exposure to drug offences may have some considerable influence. I have no data to support that, but what I can say is that the evidence and the feedback that I receive from staff in a variety of correctional facilities that predates any of the capacity issues of prisons indicates that the profile and events within prisons are becoming more violent and the nature of prisoners more violent. That is why we have acted to increase the staff. That is why we have acted to put in place trials for video cameras and we intend to roll that out. That is why we are putting in place systems and additional training for staff to make sure their interests are protected.

CHAIR: I refer to page 18 of the SDS in respect to the additional funding for the delivery of evidence based sexual offender treatment programs. Will the minister provide the committee with further details of the program and its completion rate?

Mr BYRNE: This year the Palaszczuk government has committed \$10.3 million over four years and \$2.6 million annually to expand and specialise the statewide delivery of evidence based sexual offender treatment programs. The suite of evidence based sexual offender programs delivered in custody aimed to reduce sexual offending include a nine-month high-intensity sexual offender treatment program, a three- to five-month moderate-intensity sexual offender treatment program, a five-month adapted inclusion sexual offender treatment program for prisoners with cognitive impairments, a culturally adapted Indigenous sexual offender treatment program, a preparatory program and a maintenance program. This suite of programs was first implemented by a Labor government in 2004-05.

Prior to such initiatives, a significant backlog of offenders waitlisted for a sex offender program was identified. In consultation with international experts, specialised assessment processes were adopted, a new suite of sex offender programs was developed and staff were trained in their use. In 2015-16, 409 completions of sexual offender programs across correctional centres and probation and parole offices was noted. QCS exceeded the SDS target of 380 completions. Since the project's introduction, QCS has met or exceeded its target each year.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 19 of the SDS and the percentage of prisoners in employment. Will the minister please advise the committee of the benefits that prison industries are providing for prisoners and the broader community?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member. Prison industries give prisoners the opportunity to gain vocational skills and increase their chances of employment upon release. Developing work skills and employability for prisoners helps reduce the chances they will reoffend and return to custody. Industry employment is available in all Queensland's correctional centres and includes laundry operations, constructing timber products, manufacturing metal products, creating textile products, assembling and

packaging, painting and powder coating and contributing to beef production. Many of these activities provide goods for use in the prisons and help to reduce the cost of running the facilities. There are more than 40 workshops in 10 centres across the state fitted with industry-specific plant and equipment. These workshops are able to be reconfigured to respond to new opportunities as they arise. Queensland Corrective Services partners with local companies and consults widely to ensure local and Australian companies are not disadvantaged by prison industry activities.

Ms PEASE: With reference to SDS page 20 and court ordered community service, will the minister advise what opportunities there are for prisoners to contribute to improving Queensland's national parks?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. The Capricornia Correctional Centre has engaged with the Rockhampton Regional Council in relation to the rejuvenation and expansion of the Mount Archer National Park. The Mount Archer project includes the implementation of the Mount Archer Activation Master Plan. The plan was developed through a range of stakeholders and community engagement activities, including QCS. It combines the strategic goals of the regional council and identifies a vision for Mount Archer's future tourism, economic development potential, community issues and facility improvements for the national park, to activate the area and to leave a legacy for future generations to enjoy this very beautiful space adjacent to Rockhampton. The council is now working closely with community groups, government departments and internal stakeholders. Capricornia Correctional Centre will contribute to the project, which includes the Fraser Park restoration and expansion of the Great Mount Archer Bush Walk.

Community service opportunities will be given to low-security prisoners who have met strict eligibility and suitability criteria to perform community work. A group of approximately six to 12 prisoners will be supervised to assist in the construction of mountain bike trails and the clearing of large amounts of thick scrub to form three-metre-wide trails and paths. The community service participants will gain skills that will enhance their future employment prospects, align vocational education and training with real-world experiences and contribute to the local community. It is envisaged that this project will contribute significantly to the economic, environmental and lifestyle opportunities of the Rockhampton community.

CHAIR: I will allocate the remaining time till 4.30 to the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the commissioner. I seek leave to table a document.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: The commissioner will need to see this before he can comment, I think. Commissioner, can you confirm that the union delegate and custodial officer mentioned in this newspaper report left a high-security escort of a prisoner to do a union press conference, putting at risk the safety of the other two officers of the escort and the child safety officers that they were taking the prisoner to?

Dr Rallings: No, I cannot confirm that.

Mr MANDER: Would you take that on notice, Commissioner, and investigate that matter?

Dr Rallings: Yes, I will.

Mr MANDER: If your investigation discovered that that had actually occurred, would that warrant disciplinary action?

CHAIR: That is out of order. That is an inference. I will get you to rephrase that.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. I accept that. We will put that on notice. If I can come back to the minister, in 2012 when you were the corrective services spokesperson—and I seek leave to table a press release.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: You said the corrective services minister needs to be held personally responsible for any incidents as a result of prison overcrowding. You have trumpeted already that you are a transparent and accountable government. Surely, if you have any integrity, by your own standards this means that you should have resigned by now.

CHAIR: That is out of order. If you can come up with a better question, go for it.

Mr MANDER: Let me rephrase it. Do you take personal responsibility for the consequences of prison overcrowding that is leading to increased assaults on prison officers and on prisoners?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Everton for the question. Mr Chair, isn't it ironic that we go back to 2012? What was I saying in 2012?

Mr MANDER: What you were saying is that you need to be held personally responsible.

CHAIR: You might want to let the minister finish answering your question.

Mr BYRNE: I was also saying—and you might like to add this to it—that there were only two things that were going to go up in Queensland under a Liberal National Party government: the corrections population and unemployment, both of which came to fruition. As is my role apparently these days, it is to go around and fix up the carnage that has been created by the Liberal National Party. I sat in this very chamber last estimates talking about the racing industry and more carnage created by the Liberal National Party, which sat around spending tens of millions of dollars on nothing.

Mr MANDER: Point of order: relevance, Mr Chair. That has nothing to do with the question.

CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr BYRNE: I am embracing the irrelevance of it all, simply because I do not see 2012 mentioned in the budget papers. If we are going to go on that journey and talk about that period, the member opposite was a minister of a government that simply allowed the prison population in this state to explode. He now sits there, Pontius Pilate like, saying they have absolutely no fingerprints on it. We alerted them to what was going to occur in the corrections system. What did we see? Nothing! Privatisation—

Mr MANDER: You do not accept responsibility? You do not stand by those comments?

Mr BYRNE: Ripped down every aspect, as I said before.

CHAIR: Member for Everton! Please continue, Minister.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Mr Chair. What you see in this budget is a prudent approach to addressing these issues over time. We have a variety of strategies that we are putting in place, all of which provide options for the government going forward. As I said in my opening statement, the previous Liberal National Party government took a wrecking ball to the justice system in a primordial assault on every aspect that might deflect someone from ending up institutionalised. It tore all that down, tore down all the reintegration, attacked the judiciary, rolled out mountains of mandatory sentencing, which again disempowers the judiciary, and there were assaults on the judiciary and their capacity to actually deliver their jobs independently.

Mrs STUCKEY: What are you doing it about it?

Mr BYRNE: We are fixing it. As the Attorney-General said, we are taking steps, as part of an entire and integrated system, that over time will mature the results we see. I am very confident, given the situation we have inherited, that we are moving forward in a progressive and sensible fashion.

Mr MANDER: In two years and nine months you claim the absolute damage was done?

CHAIR: There is no question there.

Mr MANDER: You do not stand by those comments that you made in 2012?

Mr BYRNE: You are talking about 2012. I have inherited what I predicted. The fact is that the member for Everton comes into this hearing, after having been part of the group that created the problem, and takes the approach, 'It was all fine when we left it.' Well, I can assure you it was not fine when you left it. You left it like the rest of the state, and that is why you are sitting over there.

Mr MANDER: We will take that as a no. Thank you. Minister, how many people escaped from Queensland correctional centres, including prison farms, in the last 12 months?

Mr BYRNE: I will get that number, but I think it is six from low-security facilities. I will confirm that. Yes, that is correct: six.

Mr MANDER: What measures have been put in place to review those escapes?

Mr BYRNE: I can say absolutely that every such event is always referred to the Corrective Services Chief Inspector for investigation. What is amazing to me is the fact that people have exited these low-security environments. As I have pointed out in my previous answers, people in low security are vetted to the best possible degree to ensure their suitability for low security. It astounds me that someone who has a very short period before they are released from custody would choose to abscond from a low-security prison. I cannot explain that. I do not think any rational person could explain the idea that somebody who is transitioning out of the prison system, who can see the end for their release, makes a conscious decision to walk off a low-security prison. That said, they are low-security offences.

Mr MANDER: All the escapes were from low-security prisons, were they?

Mr BYRNE: Yes. There have been no escapes from high-security facilities in Queensland since 1998.

Mr MANDER: Do you have any idea how much it cost to search for escaped prisoners over the last 12 months?

Mr BYRNE: It is not a number that I have at my fingertips. There is a cost to any search and recovery of people absconding.

Mr MANDER: Will you take that on notice?

Mr BYRNE: I do not think that would be easily available to us, because it is a multiagency response to recover someone who has left a low-security facility. There would be a dollar figure. There would be reattribution of resources in order to secure those offenders back in custody.

Mr MANDER: That is not part of the review?

Mr BYRNE: A dollar figure is not part of a review. A review looks at the circumstances as to how the person left custody.

CHAIR: The time for this part of the portfolio examination has now expired. Minister, you may wish to thank the relevant officers before we move on to the next part of the portfolio.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the members of my staff and the members of the department who have assisted us in preparation for these hearings. While it is a relatively short affair, I assure you that an enormous amount of work goes on in the background that on the odd occasion is not appreciated or seen to be appreciated. I know how much work is undertaken by people who support us during this scrutiny. I thank the parliamentary staff, particularly Hansard, for being present. I know how tedious these things can be, particularly after a very long day. Thank you one and all for your assistance and thank you to the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now consider the Fire and Emergency Services organisational units within the minister's portfolio. I welcome the Commissioner and also officers and representatives of the Fire and Emergency Services and the organisational units within this part of the minister's portfolio. Minister, I invite you to make an opening statement.

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Mr Chair. Joining me at this estimates hearing is the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, Katarina Carroll, the Inspector-General of Emergency Management, Mr Iain MacKenzie, and senior officers of my department. The 2016 state budget has focused on ensuring our front-line officers have the support, equipment and technologies they need to get on with the job of keeping Queenslanders safe. To achieve this, the Palaszczuk government has allocated \$74 million to facilities, urban and rural fire vehicles, and communication equipment for our emergency services here in Queensland. We are also investing a further \$8 million in operational equipment and information systems to enhance Queensland Fire and Emergency Services operational capabilities.

Many regional centres will also benefit from the state budget by ensuring that they are prepared and equipped with the right resources in the event of a disaster. We have committed a total of \$5.6 million to be spent on starting work on the replacement of auxiliary fire and rescue stations at Childers, Gordonvale, Oakey, Rainbow Beach and Tara, and extending the auxiliary fire and rescue station on Thursday Island. An allocation of \$2.3 million will continue the replacement of the auxiliary fire and rescue station at Charleville and start the specialist response and training facility upgrade at North Rockhampton. We have also invested \$9.8 million to complete construction and replacement stations and facilities at Petrie, Bundaberg and Cunnamulla and \$8 million to upgrade facilities at Bundamba, Roma and Charleville.

On Saturday, I will be launching the 2016 bushfire awareness campaign. The threat of bushfire is a big challenge for our Fire and Emergency Services personnel and we are committed to educating the community on how to be prepared for this year's bushfire season. I am confident this year's budget will ensure our emergency services personnel, both paid and volunteer, have the resource and equipment needed to respond effectively in the event of disaster anywhere in Queensland. The Palaszczuk government recognises the importance of supporting our front-line men and women who go to work each and every day and face challenging and sometimes dangerous situations in order to keep the rest of us safe.

The Palaszczuk government is also providing approximately \$4.6 million to the Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management to provide independent assurance and advice to support confidence in Queensland's disaster management arrangements and to improve outcomes for the

community. As a catalyst for excellence in disaster management, the Office of the Inspector-General will continue to work closely and collaboratively with state government agencies, local governments and other key stakeholders during 2016-17 to deliver reviews, provide authoritative and independent advice, assess and report on the effectiveness of arrangements and forge networks and partnerships to build safer communities. This year our budget is about helping them to do what they do best: looking after the safety of Queenslanders, no matter where they live in this vast state. This state budget builds on our promise to Queenslanders that we will always put their safety first.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I remind all persons that when you are called upon to provide evidence or to answer a question, speak clearly into the microphones, and pronounce your names and your titles. Could everyone in the room turn off their mobile phones or turn them to silent mode. Member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: My question is to the minister. Minister, I refer to an article in today's *Australian*, and I seek leave to table that.

CHAIR: Which SDS is this related to, please?

Mr MANDER: It is SDS page 30 of Fire and Emergency Services.

Mr CRANDON: Chair, there is no requirement in the Standing Orders for an SDS to be related to.

CHAIR: I am happy to have a private meeting to discuss that.

Mr CRANDON: Let us have a private meeting, then.

CHAIR: Okay.

Proceedings suspended from 4.37 pm to 4.40 pm

 **CHAIR:** Member for Everton, we will get you to table the document you are referring to and, at some stage during your introduction, to explain what part of the Appropriation Bill it is relevant to.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Chair. I table that newspaper article. I am referring to page 30 of the SDS in relation to Fire and Emergency Services. Minister, further on the issue of the close relationship you have with the unions, have you and your office—

CHAIR: I will have you rephrase that question.

Mr MANDER: The government proudly states that, Mr Chairman. I am not sure what—

CHAIR: The inference is that there is a close relationship. I do not know whether that is the case, so I will get you to rephrase that or I will rule it out of order.

Mr CRANDON: You do not have a close relationship with the unions, Bill? I thought you did.

Mr BYRNE: I am happy to take this, Mr Chair.

Mr MANDER: Minister, have you or your office had discussions with local unions about them taking over the volunteers of rural fire services across Queensland?

Mr BYRNE: Seriously? That is the question that comes from this? What we see in this article today is a little bit of mischief. I would be surprised if the member for Everton did not know that that article was being crafted in the first place.

Mr MANDER: You can answer any time you want.

Mr BYRNE: I digress.

Mr MANDER: You do.

Mr BYRNE: I will make this point: at least I have a relationship with firefighters, professional paid members in Queensland, because I remember sitting across there and asking a question from the Senior Officers Association, which a previous LNP minister thought was about the United Firefighters Union, and the most vitriolic response ever received in an estimates hearing.

Mr MANDER: When you want to answer the question, it would be great, Minister.

Mr BYRNE: I think the nature of the question demands a very fulsome wraparound, the first point being that the member for Everton has no relationship whatsoever, just as the previous Liberal National Party government had no relationship whatsoever—

Mr MANDER: I rise a point of order, Mr Chair.

Mr BYRNE:—with firefighters in this state.

CHAIR: What is the point of order?

Mr MANDER: The minister is being misleading. He would have absolutely no idea what my relationship is with members of unions. I ask that he withdraw because it is misleading.

CHAIR: I ask you to withdraw that part of the comment.

Mr BYRNE: I withdraw. Let us be realistic here: this article in the *Australian* today is mischief. There is absolutely no basis whatsoever to the assertions or the inference given in the question by the member for Everton—none whatsoever. Victoria, which this all seems to be wanting to piggyback onto to make this contrast, has an entirely different structure and set of arrangements to Queensland. As far as the Rural Fire Service goes, the feedback I have had from rural firefighters is nothing but appreciation and admiration for the efforts of this government. Recent measures announced in this budget and leading up to this budget, such as supporting the maintenance and fuel costs of Rural Fire Service brigades, has been very warmly received.

What we are seeing is a bit of mischief. There is no agenda whatsoever in this space. There are no negotiations. There is not even the slightest suggestion. For the member for Everton to suggest that there is some parallel or correlation between recent events in Victoria and what transpires in Queensland is a complete nonsense.

Mr MANDER: The parallel is that you have a Left Wing Labor government in Victoria and a Left Wing Labor government in Queensland. That is the parallel.

CHAIR: That is completely out of order.

Mr BYRNE: And we have had a Right Wing conservative opposition here for 17 of the past 20 years. Well done!

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, my question to the minister gives an opportunity now to clarify this once and for all: will you guarantee in any future EBA negotiations with the Queensland UFU that you will not agree to prohibiting volunteer firefighters from fighting fires until seven paid firefighters arrive to supervise them?

CHAIR: That question is out of order.

Mr MANDER: Why is it out of order?

CHAIR: Because it is a hypothetical and it is out of order. I ask you to ask relevant questions, otherwise I will go to someone else—

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, I am just seeking clarification.

CHAIR:—who can ask legitimate questions of the minister.

Mr BYRNE: I do not even understand the basis of the question. There have been no such representations ever put to me. There has been no such suggestion at any point. I am not going to presuppose what occurs or what may or may not occur in EB negotiations. Those are confidential until such time as the matters are resolved. I am not ruling anything in—

Mr MANDER: Volunteer firefighters are looking for some reassurance.

Mr BYRNE: There is absolutely nothing to substantiate what is being put forward by the member for Everton. There have been no matters of such a nature put to me. It has never been discussed. I have never seen anything in any domain that suggests those sorts of arrangements. It is completely hypothetical. Certainly nothing like that has come across my desk.

My issue with EB negotiations is principally about the terms and conditions of employment of the individuals that are underneath those EBs and the wellbeing of the Queensland public sector employees who are impacted by those EBs. It is about their terms and conditions of employment, principally. That is where my focus remains.

Mr MANDER: Can you assure the 30,000 rural fire brigade volunteers that their roles will not be overtaken by permanent unionised firefighters?

CHAIR: That question is out of order.

Mrs STUCKEY: Why?

CHAIR: Because it is hypothetical. If you have any questions related to the Appropriation Bill, please ask them and we will proceed. Members at this end of the table wish to ask questions about the Appropriation Bill.

Mr BYRNE: Mr Chair, he may as well ask me if I am going to build a space shuttle port somewhere.

Mr MANDER: It is a perfectly reasonable question to ask considering what is happening in the state.

Mr BYRNE: It is in the ether.

Mr MANDER: It is a perfectly reasonable question considering what is happening—

Mr BYRNE: Maybe you did not get enough sleep last night.

Mr MANDER: There are volunteer firefighters who are quite concerned about their futures.

CHAIR: I have ruled the question out of order.

Mr BYRNE: None that I have spoken to.

CHAIR: Move onto your next question.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, has the department done any modelling on the expansion of the role of permanent firefighters into areas that have been traditionally looked after by the volunteer and auxiliary brigades?

Commissioner Carroll: The department has not done any modelling along those lines. Certainly no representation from within the department has been put up to me along those lines.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 30 of the SDS. Is your department currently reviewing the role of some auxiliary stations and the possibility of merging them with nearby permanent stations?

Mr BYRNE: I notice the speculation that there was recently in the south-west region. I assume that is where the member is getting his orientation—the south-west region?

Mr MANDER: I am just asking generally.

Mr BYRNE: Right. No closures of fire and rescue stations, particularly within the south-west region, which was the subject of some media speculation, have occurred or are currently planned. Some communities are struggling to support the existing service delivery model. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is working with those communities to resolve issues and ensure service can be consistently delivered to meet local needs.

This is a partnership approach—that is, working with local communities to identify genuine solutions to resourcing challenges in those locations. Any decision in relation to the transition of services within the community and any change in the relevant staffing models would be developed in full consultation with that community to ensure a high level of service is maintained and confidence maintained within the community.

The QFES south-west region has five fire and rescue stations identified for replacement in the 2016-17 financial year—Charleville, Cunnamulla, Roma, Tara and Oakey. I refer to question on notice No. 5, which also refers to much of that.

While that is the situation, the fact is that many of our regional communities are in some level of decline. It is reasonable for consideration to be given to options around that service delivery model. My focus is on maintaining a level of service that the community expects. There is nothing ruled in or ruled out there. My preference is to maintain the current arrangements.

As the member would well know, some parts of Queensland have suffered serious decline in terms of their populations or the capacity of the community to actually support the services we are putting forward. We are not walking away from that. All I can guarantee is that it is my intention and the department's intention to maintain a level of service that the community expects. We will be doing that in consultation with those communities.

Mr MANDER: I refer to a recent article in the *Weekly Times* of 24 June. I seek leave to table that article.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: The article is with regard to the auxiliary fire stations in the south-west region. This is the article you were referring to earlier. In light of the answers you have given, will you explain why Assistant Commissioner Smith was reported to say that six to eight auxiliary stations may be converted back to rural stations based on their call-out rates and low staffing levels?

Mr BYRNE: I think I have just answered that. I am aware of the media report. Of course I can say to you that none of that has received any level of ministerial visibility or endorsement. I think you know the government's position from what I have said, but I can ask the commissioner to illuminate that a little more.

Mr MANDER: I am happy for you to do that.

Commissioner Carroll: I am aware that in the south-west region some of the towns are struggling to provide auxiliary staff to the auxiliary stations. As a result, the assistant commissioner in that area has consulted with the communities to implement a different service delivery model. There certainly has been no closure of auxiliary stations. It is a matter of delivering a different model of service for those towns—an enhanced model which was not in place previously.

Mr MANDER: Could you explain what 'an enhanced model' means?

Commissioner Carroll: In towns that are struggling to attract auxiliary staff, of which there are a number, the liaison with the town is to have another model in place. The model might be the one or two auxiliaries that are there in conjunction with the SES and the rural fire service. They all sit within the department and they all service their town. It is a case of those services within the department working together to deliver a service for those towns.

Mr MANDER: In those areas of south-west Queensland where there is under-resourcing, is that putting the communities at risk?

Commissioner Carroll: Certainly not. In fact, if anything, the assistant commissioner has taken a very proactive step to ensure there is enhanced service within the towns where they are struggling to attract auxiliary staff.

Mr MANDER: Minister, going on your previous comments, you can guarantee that no auxiliary stations in the state will be shut down?

Mr BYRNE: I guarantee that.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 30 of the SDS in relation to fire and emergency services. I request to table a document.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: This question is to the commissioner. I refer to the second page of the document and your comments, Commissioner. I note your commitment that no fire communication centres will close. Can you confirm whether staffing levels in fire communication centres have been reduced in the last 12 months or whether there are plans to reduce staffing levels in the next 12 months?

Commissioner Carroll: Certainly there are no plans at all to reduce staffing levels in the next 12 months. If they have been reduced that may be by way of vacancies. There certainly has been no purposeful reduction of staffing in communication centres. There will not be any closures of communication centres or any reduction in staff. Can I elaborate on how this came about, member for Everton?

Mr MANDER: Yes.

Commissioner Carroll: As a result of a gate 3 review for GWN, certain concepts were put up in relation to how communication centres should operate. In terms of those concepts which were spoken of there was obviously some miscommunication about the possible closure of communication centres, which is not the case at all. It really is reengineering how business is done in those centres because of the new technology that has been introduced. A simple example of that is where one communication centre, like Kawana, might be overloaded with work—that is, calls. How do we deal with the overflow? Does it go to other communication centres? How do we reengineer that work? That is really what it is about.

Mr MANDER: In relation to fire communication centres, what was the budget allocation and head count allocation for 2015-16 and what is it for the current financial year?

Commissioner Carroll: I will have to take that on notice because I do not have those exact figures. I will get back to you.

CHAIR: We move now to government questions.

Ms PEASE: Page 29 of the SDS refers to the efforts to continue to transform Queensland Fire and Emergency Services into an inclusive, respectful and diverse organisation. I ask the minister to provide the committee with an update on the progress made with regard to the implementation of recommendations contained in Allison review of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and in particular to ensure that women in emergency services are valued and respected?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Lytton for the question about a matter that has focused my attention since I assumed these responsibilities. On 20 August 2015 the Palaszczuk government accepted all 30 recommendations of the independent review by Margaret Allison. Commissioner Carroll of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has established the Cultural Improvement Implementation Project, which is led by an assistant commissioner and is focused on cultural reform, discipline and compliance.

On 28 April 2016 the Premier confirmed the appointment of Lieutenant General Mark Evans as the independent chair of the implementation committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. Representatives from QFES have met with Lieutenant General Evans and provided him with an overview of the substantial body of work undertaken to date.

In March 2016 I met with a select group of female firefighters. A further meeting was held on 21 June 2016 with four female firefighters and Lieutenant General Evans to discuss organisational improvement, difficulties experienced and the empowerment of women to drive innovation and change. To date, key initiatives which have been implemented include the development and delivery of workplace behaviour training to all paid employees of QFES. The completion of these courses ensures that all staff are aware of the workplace behaviour expected of them and their staff. A complaints management framework and supporting policies have been developed and reviewed following consultation with key stakeholders. New strategies and training have been implemented to identify, prevent, report and resolve incidents of workplace bullying and harassment.

Through these strategies QFES has set a clear benchmark for acceptable behaviour and implemented robust lines of support and validation for victims of inappropriate behaviour. A harassment contact officer network has been established for QFES personnel. New arrangements are in place to support female recruits through their training and on placement. An assessment of all stations was undertaken to ensure all female firefighters are afforded the appropriate level of privacy. The resulting program of capital works has been approved for implementation.

An online QFES code of conduct training package has been developed to address QFES requirements and has been rolled out. This training ensures a workplace that understands the standards and conduct expected of staff and that this understanding of actions and consequences will boost cultural reform within the organisation.

A full review of QFES basegrade firefighter recruitment processes was undertaken to ensure contemporary inclusive practices were implemented. Findings from this review have been implemented, with a new recruitment strategy implemented on 1 December 2015. A new targeted recruitment campaign to promote firefighting as a career for women has been developed and will be launched prior to the QFES applicant pool for firefighter positions being reopened in mid-2016. QFES is dedicated to transforming the organisation and is committed to providing a workplace that provides and meets contemporary expectations of acceptable workplace behaviour and ensures a safe environment that is free from harassment and bullying for all employees.

Mr BROWN: Minister, I refer to page 29 of the SDS which refers to the Palaszczuk Labor government's objective to deliver operational excellence by continuing to provide contemporary fire and emergency services, and I ask: will the minister please provide the committee with an update on the Fire and Emergency Services' delivery requirements for the Mount Cotton area?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. The Mount Cotton area is currently serviced by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' fire and rescue brigades. A feasibility assessment for forming a rural fire brigade in Mount Cotton is currently being conducted by QFES based on risk in the area. QFES and Redland City Council have met on a number of occasions regarding community expectation and service delivery requirements in Mount Cotton. QFES continues to assess options to address this matter. Once all key stakeholders have been consulted, public meetings will be considered in collaboration with Redland City Council. Fire and rescue stations do not have operational response boundaries, and crews are available to respond to emergency incidents in any area as required. QFES is well resourced across the state and continues to provide the appropriate levels of operational response to ensure the safety of the community.

CHAIR: I refer to page 30 of the SDS in relation to preparedness for severe weather risk. What efforts is the Palaszczuk government taking to build preparedness for the upcoming storm and cyclone season?

Mr BYRNE: The Palaszczuk government will continue supporting the get ready initiative in partnership with local councils to build the state's resilience to deal with natural disasters and to encourage local communities' participation in preparedness and resilience building. The initiative seeks to ensure all persons and relevant agencies are prepared for severe weather seasons.

In November 2015 the Palaszczuk government launched a new \$5 million 'If It's Flooded. Forget It.' campaign which targets decision-making for crossing flooded roads. The campaign was launched across Queensland and includes commercials over TV, radio, print and various other social media platforms. A web based tool has been developed to identify alternative routes around flooded roads. Reviews of this program have indicated that it is successful in changing the mindset of people when confronted with these situations.

The Queensland Strategy For Disaster Resilience was developed to create Australia's most disaster resilient state. In order to increase the level of disaster risk awareness and preparedness in the community, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' staff are working with councils to engage at a local level to deliver key messages about local risks. Regional engagement activities have included running community safety days.

The annual Queensland Tropical Cyclone Consultative Committee preseason briefings to regional areas will commence in October 2016 and will be delivered in approximately 10 locations across the state. QFES has trained personnel ready to provide support to management teams in the operation of cyclone storm tide shelters and will ensure full engagement and representation with local and district disaster management groups.

The State Disaster Coordination Centre watch desk provides a 24/7 emergency management capability for the Queensland government and disaster management stakeholders. The watch desk monitors, collects and analyses a wide range of emergency management information from diverse mediums in order to notify, inform and warn key stakeholders. The watch desk is also the single point of dissemination of emergency alert campaigns in Queensland and coordinated State Emergency Service tasking. QFES manages the emergency alert national telephone warning system for Queensland which sends voice messages about potential or actual emergencies to landlines and text messages to mobile phones within a defined area providing information on the emergency, what action to take and where to find further information.

The watch desk receives warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology via email, verbal briefings and teleconferences and by staff logging into the registered users site. A full-time meteorologist from the Bureau of Meteorology was embedded into the coordination centre in September 2014. The meteorologist provides the SDCC and state operations centre with timely and contextualised products and information, specific weather and climate briefings, and coordinates and conducts fire weather training to QFES employees statewide.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I refer to page 29 of the SDS, which refers to the strategy to provide integrated emergency management training for the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, and I ask: will the minister please update the committee on how the Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy at Whyte Island will support the implementation of this strategy?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Lytton for her question. I note her ongoing interest in Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy and the key role it plays in providing world-class training to personnel from Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, Queensland paramedics, the Queensland Police Service, the Australian Defence Force and commercial clients.

Having been transferred to the Public Safety Business Agency under the previous government's policies, the academy has now transitioned back to where it belongs at QFES. The academy has a number of resources which include realistic streetscapes, a live fire-training facility, urban search and rescue collapse site and a state-of-the-art visual reality simulator. Having these resources on hand means that community networks and training can be delivered and supported. Between January 2015 and July 2016, 8,632 various exercises were held within the academy. There are 1,229 exercises booked to be completed from January 2017.

The academy has adopted an all-hazards approach towards emergency management combining disaster management, emergency management and volunteer training which has created new opportunities and markets to support private, public and not-for-profit sectors. The academy's recent major achievements include the development of a level 3 incident management course in conjunction with the Western Australian Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Fire and Rescue NSW that meets our requirements for all-hazards approach to the management of large-scale emergency

incidents; facilitating the provision of two visiting fellows to represent QFES on the Queensland police leadership program and the graduate diploma management course at the Australian Institute of Police Management in Manly, New South Wales; and the delivery of over 7,000 units of disaster management training during 2015-16 to disaster management stakeholders across Queensland.

The academy currently has 97 recruit firefighters scheduled to undergo firefighter training. This current recruit course and future courses will undertake basic aircraft firefighting training. On 9 August 2016 the academy takes possession of new leased premises from the Port of Brisbane. The new site will be named Riverfront campus, is directly opposite the existing school of fire and emergency services training facility on Howard Smith Drive, Lytton. The new premises ensures that QFES can facilitate additional training demands. It will offer two training rooms and two smaller meeting rooms. It is estimated that the training rooms will provide classroom space for up to 25 trainees. Office space will be made available to provide room packages to design, develop and deliver training packages.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 30 of the SDS. My question is to the Inspector-General of Emergency Services. Inspector-General, can you advise the committee of the level of funding that was contributed towards the 'If It's Flooded. Forget It.' campaign in 2015-16? What is the specific budget for this in 2016-17?

Mr MacKenzie: I point out that that reference to page 30 of the SDS is relevant to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, not my part of the portfolio, so I will refer that to the commissioner if I can.

Commissioner Carroll: That is correct; \$5 million was allocated for that funding, and in 2016-17 an additional \$1 million has been allocated.

Mr MANDER: What will the extra investment of \$1 million for next year represent?

Commissioner Carroll: It will be a series of television, radio and online advertising for 'If It's Flooded. Forget It.'

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, has the department assessed the impact of that campaign and whether or not the message has resonated with Queenslanders?

Commissioner Carroll: We have done extensive research on the campaign and I know that it has resonated, but I will not give you the exact details. Can I take the question on notice to make sure that is correct?

Mr MANDER: Sure. Could you give me those figures again for 2015-16 and 2016-17?

Commissioner Carroll: \$5 million in funding was provided through the Cabinet Budget Review Committee to reinstate the 2015-16 'If It's Flooded. Forget It.' advertising campaign. It is \$5 million for 2015-16 and an additional \$1 million for the 2016-17 campaign.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. What resources has the department allocated towards the get ready preparation campaign for 2016-17 and how much was spent on the campaign in 2015-16?

Commissioner Carroll: I am advised that campaign belongs to local government; it is not administered through QFES.

Mr MANDER: Okay. Commissioner, I refer to page 30 of the SDS. What was the budget for overtime for permanent firefighters for 2015-16?

Commissioner Carroll: For 2015-16 it was \$22.2 million.

Mr MANDER: And for 2016-17?

Commissioner Carroll: We are estimating that it will be the same amount, \$22 million.

Mr MANDER: What steps are you taking with regards to minimising that overtime investment?

Commissioner Carroll: This has been a massive reduction over time because of the strategies that we have implemented. It went from 2013-14, \$19 million; 2014-15, \$26.8 million; and 2015-16, \$22.2 million. The expenditure on overtime falls, as you might know, in three broad categories of operational expense, training, and replacing staff on leave to maintain service delivery.

We are additionally seeking business improvements in delivering world-class operations. Included in this approach is an internal review of overtime expenditure and overtime practices across QFES regions and business units. The results of this review are due in the next couple of months, so I have instigated a review into the organisation to see what the problems are. The financial sustainability review of QFES and the delivery of QFES services has also been undertaken. QFES has also

implemented a process of budget expenditure review to ensure the allocation and disbursement of funds, including the use of overtime, occurs in accordance with the financial accountability framework. These strategies have been employed to contain the year-on-year increases I have just spoken about without direct impacts on service delivery to the community.

The introduction, though, of the reserve roster initiative will also provide an alternative staffing solution to using overtime to backfill positions and will allow QFES to backfill absences utilising our reserve firefighters employed in a permanent position, significantly offsetting overtime expenditure. Obviously for the future, the reserve roster is what we anticipate will significantly reduce that overtime again.

Mr MANDER: Can you tell me what the salary is for a senior firefighter?

Commissioner Carroll: I understand it is around \$60,000 but I will take that on notice and get back to you with the exact amount.

Mr MANDER: Is it possible as well—and I am not sure whether it is—to know what the average firefighter receives considering the overtime allocation they receive every year?

Commissioner Carroll: It would be possible for me to go and look into what their wage for the year is and know exactly what their wage is and what they earned in overtime, yes.

Mr MANDER: That would be great if you could take that on notice, please. I think the member for Beaudesert wants to ask a question, Chair.

Commissioner Carroll: Member for Everton, \$60,000 is correct.

Mr MANDER: Is that the salary for a senior firefighter or a basegrade firefighter?

Commissioner Carroll: A basegrade firefighter.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

Mr KRAUSE: My question is for the minister. Minister, in 2014 a budget allocation was made to construct a joint auxiliary and rural fire service shed at Rathdowney. Since the change in government in early 2015 there has been very slow, if any, progress on the proposal. Could you please tell us if the funding is still available and when the project will proceed?

Mr BYRNE: I am advised that the Rathdowney Rural Fire Brigade and the Rathdowney Auxiliary Brigade will share new premises. The planning work is being undertaken, with the work expected to commence on the Rathdowney project in early 2017.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can you tell me whether you have considered the request from auxiliary firefighters to increase their mandatory retirement age, because many of them are happy to continue in that role beyond the current limit of 65 years?

Mr BYRNE: The issue of mandatory retirement ages is one that is often raised with me from a variety of my portfolio areas. I know from my previous working life that people do work beyond their mandatory retirement ages. I had examples of that when I worked for Defence and with Army. Very experienced army people worked beyond 65 years of age because of their very specific and hard-to-acquire skills, particularly in some of the things we were doing, like airspace management. It is not something that a lot of people understand and are able to do.

I have had discussions—I would not say formal representations—with a variety of people from those bodies who are approaching retirement age. Given the nature of people these days, they tend to be fitter and more active and want to continue to work. I have had discussions with police officers who would like to continue beyond 60. I know that some who are approaching retirement want to continue to work.

I have not had deliberate discussions with firefighters of any description about retirement ages. That does not mean that I am not in principle supportive of the idea that people can make a contribution beyond mandatory retirement. As I have seen it happen in a previous life, people can retire and come back and work in another capacity or a part-time or temporary capacity, although perhaps not in a front-line capacity. You do not find 65-year-old infantry soldiers running around the bush; what you do find is people sitting behind, setting them up and passing on their knowledge and skills. I have had discussions. There have been no formal representations that I am aware of. I am not in principle opposed to the idea but it would have to be consulted with the broader workforce if we were going to consider that.

Mr MANDER: By your answer, you sound quite sympathetic to it then?

Mr BYRNE: I know in my own working life where people beyond 65 make a very valuable contribution and one that cannot be found easily from others who are available in the right time and space to deliver something. I am not opposed to it, but there would be process issues, I would imagine, and retirement issues, superannuation issues and other matters that would have to be worked through in detail. I do not believe that 65 means that that is the end of your productive working life or capacity to contribute.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I refer to page 33 of the SDS in relation to discontinued measures. Why are these measures being discontinued?

Mr BYRNE: This measure does not provide a measure of volunteer effectiveness. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services previously reported on a number of State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service volunteers per 100,000 population. These performance measures are being discontinued as they do not provide a measure of volunteer effectiveness or emergency response readiness. Our volunteers play a crucial role in keeping the community safe. A key objective for QFES is to empower volunteerism by recognising, respecting and valuing volunteers. As part of working towards this objective, new measures have been introduced into 2016-17 to report volunteer satisfaction for Rural Fire Service and SES. The Service Delivery Statements reported that the estimated actual number of SES and Rural Fire Service volunteers per 100,000 population was 130.4 and 757.8 respectively in 2015-16. Both SES and Rural Fire Service are expected to exceed their targets in 2015-16. These measures are being discontinued but will continue to be monitored internally.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 56 of the SDS where it notes the \$74 million the Palaszczuk Labor government is investing in new and upgraded fire and emergency facilities and equipment. Will the minister please provide the committee with a breakdown of how this significant investment will support the delivery of vital front-line public safety services in the Redlands?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government is making significant investments to support Queensland Fire and Emergency Services delivering emergency management capabilities to the Redlands region. The three operational services within QFES operate in the Redlands region—Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Fire Service and State Emergency Service. Fire and Rescue Service Redlands region forms part of the QFES Brisbane region's Cleveland area command within the southern zone command response area. The Capalaba electorate is served by the Capalaba Fire and Rescue Station and is a full-time staffed facility. In the 2016-17 year, \$40,000 has been allocated for improvements to vehicle access, \$15,000 to improve the existing roof and \$5,000 for station maintenance and repairs. The Cleveland area command office will undergo a \$65,000 upgrade in the 2016-17 year to enhance current operational standards. In 2015-16, the Dunwich Auxiliary Fire and Rescue Station on North Stradbroke Island underwent an upgrade to incorporate a command and control centre for use during wildfires. A further \$20,000 has been allocated in the 2016-17 year to complete these works.

QFES supports four rural fire brigades and 189 volunteers within the Redlands area. QFES is continuing to strengthen Queensland's bushfire capability and work towards enhanced coordination of activities and improved engagement with local communities and ensuring they are prepared for the bushfire season. From 1 July 2016, QFES will be providing support to Rural Fire Service asset registered vehicles in the form of fuel and maintenance funding. The fuel and vehicle maintenance funding initiative will include the provision of vehicle servicing, including annual safety inspections, repairs other than insurance claims and fuel requirements for Rural Fire Service asset registered vehicles. This is a new level of support for the brigades and one that has been very warmly received. Vehicle maintenance will ensure 10 RFS appliances in the Redlands area are compliant with roadworthy standards without burdening brigades to meet the sometimes high cost of vehicle maintenance. This provision of fuel support to Rural Fire Service brigades is intended to allow them more capacity to undertake community preparedness and preparation activities.

In addition, communications have been improved, with approximately 42 portable or vehicle based GWN radios delivered to brigades in the Redlands area. The development of the Office of Bushfire Mitigation in December 2015 supports brigades to ensure their communities are ready for the seasons ahead. This new initiative will further enhance the capabilities of brigades by allowing them to increase mitigation activities while reducing the burden financially.

In the State Emergency Service in 2015-16, the government is investing \$45,640 to support the Redland City SES unit, which currently has approximately 190 active members located at Cleveland, Redland Bay, the Southern Moreton Bay islands and North Stradbroke Island. This investment

purchased personal protective equipment and other equipment necessary to enable SES regional operations. The government also provided an additional \$18,000 to the Redland City Council to support SES operations in the Redlands community.

CHAIR: I refer to page 30 of the SDS with respect to the focus on reducing bushfire risk. Would you advise the committee of the steps the Palaszczuk government is taking to strengthen Queensland's bushfire-fighting capability?

Mr BYRNE: I thank you for the question. The Palaszczuk government is continuing to strengthen Queensland's bushfire capability by enhancing coordination of activities and improving engagement with local communities to ensure they are prepared for the bushfire season. The 2016-17 budget sets out an investment of \$9.1 million for land acquisition for rural fire brigade stations and new and replacement rural appliances. These new and replacement rural appliances will assist rural fire brigades in protecting their communities. In December 2015, the Office of Bushfire Mitigation was established within QFES to support efforts to prepare for and respond to bushfires. The office coordinates mitigation activities across the state and oversees the important work that area fire management groups, bushfire safety officers and fire wardens undertake for their local communities.

QFES is also increasing its bushfire mitigation capacity and moving to an increasingly systematic evidence based approach to bushfire mitigation. The 2016 Operation Cool Burn is using a REDI-portal tool to prioritise risks for the season through bushfire hazard mapping, fire history information and identification of at-risk structures and communities.

The REDI-portal tool is a new mapping and analysis tool and is available to members of the area fire management groups, QFES, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, rural fire brigades and HQ Plantations. In addition, Operation Cool Burn 2016 has an increased focus on targeted education, particularly using the growing volunteer community educator network to inform communities in high-risk locations how they can prepare for the coming fire season.

Communications for bushfire response have also been improved with approximately 2,100 portable and vehicle based global wireless network radios delivered to South-East Queensland rural fire brigades. This improves the interoperability between essential emergency services in times of bushfire, with the Queensland Police Service, the Queensland Ambulance Service and QFES able to communicate on a fully encrypted network.

There has been an increase in the number of bushfire safety officers and trained public information officers through further recruitment and training drives by QFES. Additionally, QFES is a key stakeholder and participant in the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, the national public information and warnings working group that was established to develop national emergency alert and warning systems.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 37 of the SDS which refers to the \$8.1 million investment in the operational equipment and information systems. Will the minister advise the committee how this investment will support critical work undertaken by QFES?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Capalaba for the question. The Palaszczuk government has invested \$8.1 million in 2016-17 in operational equipment and information systems for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. A large portion of funding—\$4.5 million—has been allocated for operational plant and equipment including the following: protective clothing such as fully encapsulated gas and chemical suits to help emergency service workers respond to hazardous incidents, specialised and field portable scientific analysis and detection equipment, thermal imaging cameras for identifying fire sources and detecting persons trapped in collapsed buildings, motorised swiftwater rescue craft to increase the safety of firefighters and recovery of persons in swiftwater rescue situations, technical and road crash rescue equipment, portable generators, compressors to refill self-contained breathing apparatus, portable decontamination facilities and first response all-terrain vehicles.

A further \$1.4 million has been set aside for specialised operational equipment to support public safety at the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games and \$2.2 million has also been allocated for a new and upgraded operational information system and mobile phone applications. These investments will enable QFES personnel to respond to a wide range of fire and other emergency incidents and will further enhance the safety of the Queensland community.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 30 of the SDS which refers to the continuation of the vital Fight Fire Fascination and the Road Attitudes and Action Planning community education programs, both of which were slashed under the previous LNP government. Can the minister please outline the practical public safety benefits of these campaigns that are provided to the community?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. The community education campaigns the member refers to are vitally important programs which unquestionably save lives at a minimal cost to the taxpayer. As the member points out, regrettably both of these programs were recklessly cut by the previous Liberal National Party government. It is my great pleasure to be part of a government that has resurrected these valuable programs. The Palaszczuk government has allocated \$250,000 to the Road Attitudes and Action Planning program in 2016-17 to deliver practical, life-saving road safety education programs to young drivers. This program is facilitated by operational firefighters.

The delivery of the RAAP sessions to senior students at high schools across Queensland provides them with an improved understanding of acceptable driving behaviours and why an appropriate attitude to road safety is essential. The program is identified as an investment in young drivers and provides a unique opportunity to educate the next generation of drivers about the serious consequences of road trauma. It also provides a valuable opportunity to connect with young Queenslanders and make a real difference in their future. The program's primary objective is to reduce the number of injuries and deaths in road crashes in the 17 to 24 age group, which is overrepresented in statistics. In 2012, a research report conducted by Footprints Market Research reported very positive results as to the effectiveness of the RAAP program. A total of 87 per cent of participants said that they were more aware of the dangers involved with driving and using RAAP strategies to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

The Palaszczuk government has also allocated \$280,000 to deliver the Fight Fire Fascination program, which is a free, confidential and voluntary education program designed to teach children and young children to respect fire and develop fire safety skills. The program has been designed to be flexible to enable effective delivery to ensure the individual requirements and circumstances of each child and family are met. The program works in partnership with schools, mental health services and other community agencies to ensure children and families get the help they need.

The educational program is designed firstly to work with the child or the young person who has been playing with fire and their family and carers to learn fire safe skills. It also educates and promotes fire safety and prevention measures to children more broadly and it lessens the incidents of deliberate fires lit by children and young people between the ages of three and 17. The results from previous surveys of clients indicated that 91 per cent of them did not return to fire play or setting and 98 per cent would refer the program to others.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Currumbin next.

Mrs STUCKEY: My question is to the minister. We are seeing more and more irresponsible behaviours requiring assistance from emergency services. What is the government policy for recouping any costs incurred? I am talking about people who wander off and perhaps do not tell people. We have seen a lot of rescues on television. Some people vanish for several days and reappear. Does your current policy require a review in light of increasing incidents of this nature?

Mr BYRNE: I might have to take that one on notice but I understand the point you are making. I do know that there are cost recovery measures on broader national search and rescue or other foolish incidents. The idea of recovering dollars from someone in the middle of a foolish act, as we saw the other night here in Brisbane with young people jumping off cranes—one could argue that perhaps a financial impediment to discourage them from such risky acts might be useful, but I will take the core of your question on notice.

CHAIR: We probably have time for one last question.

Mr MANDER: My question is to the commissioner. I refer to page 30 of the SDS in relation to Fire and Emergency Services. I refer to the monitoring and reviewing of the disaster management guidelines as stipulated in the SDS. Commissioner, could you tell me who is undertaking that review and how much that review might cost?

Commissioner Carroll: Just bear with me for a moment, member for Everton. Can I take that question on notice? I do have responsibility for reviewing it, but I cannot actually give you a costing. That is done internally obviously.

Mr MANDER: It is an internal review.

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, definitely. It is a requirement under the Disaster Management Act. There are 10 guidelines that are prioritised to be reviewed over the next two years—actually some have been completed by 2016. In terms of the costing, I will have to get back to you on that.

Mr MANDER: Are local governments part of that review process?

Commissioner Carroll: Yes, definitely. We work closely with local governments as a part of our reviews. I probably should refer you to the Inspector-General of IGEM to give you some further detail in relation to that relationship with local governments.

Mr MacKenzie: I thank the member for the question. Certainly while the commissioner undertakes the internal review of those documents which is part of her doctrine, we foster an ongoing relationship through particularly the LGAQ and their disaster management officer and, in particular, through working with local governments across the state, particularly through their disaster management plan assessments throughout the year.

Mr MANDER: Are the results of those reviews made public?

Mr MacKenzie: The results of those reviews are made public. We tabled three reviews in the last financial year. There are a number of reviews now with the minister that we will be working through a process to make them public as well.

CHAIR: It being close enough to the end of this segment, I thank the minister and I thank the representatives of the QFES. I will hand back to you, Minister, to make any closing remarks.

Mr BYRNE: Again, I thank my staff, the commissioner, the parliamentary staff and Hansard, and of course members of the committee for their efforts today in scrutinising the budget and policy settings that go with it. I know that there is always a lot of work that goes into this—probably an enormous and disproportionate amount of work. I much appreciate all of the assistance I have received from everyone in the room. I hope that has helped the committee have a broader understanding of the budget allocations.

CHAIR: The committee will now take a short break and resume at 6 pm.

Proceedings suspended from 5.42 pm to 6.01 pm



CHAIR: We will resume the hearing for estimates on the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. We will now consider the proposed expenditure related to the Police Service. I call the minister to make an opening statement.

Mr BYRNE: Before I commence my opening statement, can I put on the record a response to a question we took on notice from Corrections by the commissioner?

CHAIR: Sure.

Mr BYRNE: This involves the alleged incident at Lotus Glen Correctional Centre. I am advised that QCS is aware of the allegation. QCS is not in a position to confirm whether this allegation is true. This has been referred to the Department of Justice and Attorney-General Ethical Standards Unit for investigation. As the matter is currently subject to investigation, the commissioner is unable to comment further. I can table that response.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr BYRNE: Good evening, everyone. Joining me in tonight's estimates hearing is the Police Commissioner, Ian Stewart; Anthony Reilly of the Public Safety Business Agency; and the senior leadership of the Queensland Police Service. No-one knows better than the commissioner that the 11,797 men and women of the Queensland Police Service have one of the most dangerous jobs in the state.

To ensure Queenslanders' safety in tackling crime, more than 600 new police officers have hit the beat in 2015-16. On top of that, 363 police officers are returning to the Queensland Police Service following the review of the Public Safety Business Agency. Eighteen of those officers will remain embedded in PSBA to provide specialist advice relating to QPS projects. That means the Palaszczuk government has ticked off on both its commitment to finalise the implementation of the increase in police numbers by 1,100 over four financial years and its promise to review the bureaucratic mess left by the previous government with the PSBA.

Police officers are the people who ensure that the community sleep safely at night and feel comfortable going about their daily lives. To do their jobs properly they need the support of the Queensland government working to tackle crime in the 21st century. That is why we are delivering an additional 2,200 body worn video cameras to police as part of our statewide rollout. This builds on the \$6 million allocated in last year's budget.

We know that the risk profile of the state and the nation has been elevated as a result of international events. The Palaszczuk government has moved quickly to ensure Queenslanders' safety with more than \$16 million set aside for police to improve counterterrorism capability and capacity in

response to sustained national threat levels. This includes \$788,000 for operational equipment and vehicles. An amount of \$5 million has been allocated to develop a business case for a contemporary counterterrorism and community safety centre at the Westgate Police Academy. While the Liberal National Party government focused solely on one group involved in organised crime—that is, bikies—the Palaszczuk government has ensured that the QPS can target all offenders involved in organised crime. This includes increased funding of \$39.1 million over four years to target serious and organised crime and implement the government's response to the Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry report.

An amount of \$3.2 million over two years has been allocated to tackle child exploitation and implement the interim response to that report. This funding will enable a statewide blitz on child exploitation material by building the capability of specialist police officers and providing additional civilian staff and regional travel and training costs. This builds on the \$20 million of additional funding over four years allocated to combat organised crime, alcohol fuelled violence and ice in the 2015-16 budget.

Too many lives have been taken on Queensland roads this year. To improve road safety and deter bad behaviour, the Palaszczuk government's budget includes \$12.6 million in new funding for the Camera Detected Offence Program. This includes capital funding for installation of additional fixed and mobile digital cameras and point-to-point cameras.

We are supporting front-line police in their response to domestic violence. In line with Labor's whole-of-government response to the *Not now, not ever* report, \$17.2 million over five years has been allocated for QPS to tackle domestic and family violence through several initiatives. Our police do great work day in and day out and I thank them for that, as I am sure we all do. This budget delivers on our commitment to these hardworking men and women to target all facets of crime and to keep our communities safe.

CHAIR: I will go to the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I refer to page 27 of the QPS SDS in relation to weapons licensing. Can you explain why in recent times large numbers of law-abiding primary producers have had their category H licence renewals rejected, despite having them successfully renewed for decades?

Mr BYRNE: What I can say is that there have been no changes in any way, shape or form. What is occurring within the Queensland police is that the application process for weapons is being rigorously scrutinised. One of the aspects of the national firearms agreement is that reasonable purpose for the use of the firearm has to be established. That is my understanding. It has nothing to do with government position or policy at all; it has to do with the licensing branch in fact scrutinising applications as thoroughly as they possibly can. I would think the community would expect that.

I have been advised previously that many of those applications are found to be absent the baseline justification for possession of a weapon, and those licences have been naturally rejected. For anyone who is found to have those applications rejected there are review processes through QCAT that any licence holder can undertake to have those decisions tested, and that is what is occurring.

Mr MANDER: There has obviously been a change, whether it is government policy or whether it is in Weapons Licensing itself, with regard to reviewing these renewable applications because electorate officers right across the state have been inundated with primary producers who have said they have received their renewals for decades and have suddenly been told that they will no longer be able to get it without any other signs of difference with regard to the application process.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Everton for the question. You would understand that this is not a matter of government or ministerial process. This is not a matter for a minister. I do not engage in or entertain interference in process inside the Queensland Police Service at all. What is happening here and what I have been advised is that the licensing branch is doing what the community expect it to do, and I will defend the actions and decisions of the licensing branch every step of the way.

What I can say is that where an individual has a problem with the decisions that are made in the licensing branch there is an established default for them to contest those views. I encourage them to do so if they feel as though they have been denied their rightful justice. Given that this is perhaps an internal operational issue for QPS, I might see if the commissioner would want to illuminate this.

Mr MANDER: Let me ask a specific question, if I may, of the commissioner. Commissioner, can you confirm that members of the Weapons Licensing branch have rung or written to law-abiding primary producers upon receipt of their category H licence renewal recommending that they withdraw their licence renewal application because it will not be successful?

Commissioner Stewart: I thank the member for the question. We actually have the senior officer from the Weapons Licensing section with us tonight. We are just going to confer with him. I would confirm the issues raised by the minister in relation to the processes that we are required to undertake, particularly in relation to the scrutiny, of course, in relation to handguns and concealable firearms, which are category H weapons that we are talking about. What is interesting, though, is that we have seen a marked increase in total licences on issue in this state in recent years. I have the actual numbers. In 2012-13—

Mr MANDER: With respect, Mr Chairman—

CHAIR: Can we have the response from the commissioner first? Please continue, Commissioner.

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you. Category H applications—

Mr CRANDON: It is not a relevant answer.

Mr MANDER: Good point. Point of order, Mr Chairman. The point of order is with regard to relevance. I have asked specifically about primary producer renewal applications. I am not really interested in the general figures; I am only interested in primary producers.

CHAIR: I cannot see any point of order. Please continue, Commissioner.

Commissioner Stewart: I will try to get that for you as we are talking. I think it is important for the committee to be aware that in 2012-13 category H licences on issue to people in Queensland counted 10,832. In 2015-16 that number rose to 13,725. As I said, we are just getting the advice. I will hand to Deputy Commissioner Steve Gollschewski, who will give some advice.

Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski: The advice is that all persons who are rejected are being contacted individually by Weapons Licensing branch and talked through the reasons. What has changed is that there have been some QCAT decisions that have put an interpretation on the weapons licensing regime and how it should be interpreted in relation to category H. I do not have the details of those decisions here, but—

Mr MANDER: I have those, thank you.

Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski: I am informed that there are around a hundred this year—I do not have a precise number—and that is an increase on previous years. It is also in relation to the interpretation of humane destruction and advice on what that actually means within the legislation, and an interpretation of that is now being applied through the weapons licensing regime.

Mr MANDER: Should I continue to direct my questions with regard to this to the assistant commissioner?

Commissioner Stewart: To help the committee, if you like, I actually have the advice from both from the CSIRO and the Commonwealth department of sustainability as well as the Queensland state department of national parks in relation to model codes of practice for the humane destruction of animals, which is relevant to all of this if you would like me to give that to you.

Mr MANDER: No, I do not, thanks, Commissioner. That CSIRO report is 25 years old and has suddenly now been referred to as relevant. I want to go back, if I can, to this issue of the advice that has been given to applicants—primary producers. My question is: are they being written to or rung and advised to withdraw their application because it will not be successful?

Commissioner Stewart: I will certainly take that on notice right now, but we should be able to give you an answer by the end of the session. I can confirm that what has happened is because people have made application to appeal the situation, the special needs category has changed because of the QCAT definition.

Mr MANDER: I would argue that is debatable because there have been a couple of QCAT decisions. Can you confirm that officers from the Weapons Licensing Branch have threatened category H license renewal applicants and said that they will 'put a mark on your file against other applications you submit' if they do not withdraw their current application?

Commissioner Stewart: Sir, I do not have any knowledge of that. I have not seen any complaints of that nature to either the QPS or CCC; however, what I would advise is if that type of behaviour was seen to occur, the person who they were talking to has the right to make a formal complaint and I would encourage them to do so. As I said, I am not aware of any of those complaints at this time.

Mr MANDER: I seek leave to table a document

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I will ask you to review this document. It confirms both assertions that I have made. Officers of the Weapons Licensing Branch are writing and ringing law-biding primary producers who have had category H licences for decades and advising them of the process, but telling them that their application will be rejected and then telling them that, if they continue with their application, a mark will be placed against their future applications. I think it is totally intolerable that these people are being threatened with this type of behaviour. I would ask you to comment about that.

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you, sir, for providing this advice to me. My advice is that the particular individuals are being advised to withdraw, as their current applications will not meet the thresholds required to be successful in the licence. This is about the issue of rejection in terms of they have to advise on future applications that they have been previously rejected. What our officers were trying to do is to say that, if you simply withdraw at the moment and are not rejected, that rejection not does not count in the future. Meaning, there is no rejection; you have simply withdrawn your application. If you then want to put in a fresh application at some time in the future, whether that is tomorrow or in two years time, there will not be a mark of rejection on the previous application. Because that is one of the criteria they look at, they are trying to be helpful.

Mr MANDER: As a layperson reading that, it seems threatening to me. It is basically saying to people that if you continue with your application it will have a negative effect on your ability with this licence and other licences in the future. If that is not the case, that needs to be very clearly communicated to people because they are also receiving phone calls as well.

Commissioner Stewart: I appreciate you bringing this to my attention. Perhaps the wording and the context of the letter needs to be better explained. I can see exactly what the members of weapons licensing are trying to do. They are trying to make sure that people do not inadvertently cause themselves more hardship later on when they reapply, but perhaps the context around that could be changed. I really do thank you for bringing that to our attention, and I will refer it back through the appropriate area to have it reviewed.

Mr MANDER: Minister, you have talked about the fact that there has been no change of policy, and we have heard from the Commissioner that there have been some different interpretations that have taken place. Minister, why do you not change the law and make it clearer so that primary producers—those law-abiding citizens who require handguns for the humane euthanising of animals for safety reasons—can continue to receive those licences?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. I find it ironic that this line of questioning is even in place. What you are suggesting and trying to put on the table is that the Weapons Licensing Branch is doing something inappropriate in scrutinising the licensing of high-powered concealable handguns. Weapons licensing are doing exactly what the community expect them to do, and what they are discovering—from what has been revealed here—is that there are many applications out there which are dubious or have question marks about them. I would expect the Queensland Police Service to do exactly what they are paid to do: test the veracity of claims being put forward. That is what you are seeing evidence of here today: the Queensland Police Service doing what they are paid to do, which is keep Queenslanders safe. People who should not be holding high-powered handguns in a dubious set of circumstances should be tested and revealed. That is the position that I see going forward here.

More broadly, I have made my views known about the question of people in rural applications but I will just reinforce it for the member. The argument that high-powered handguns are a necessary tool of trade in the agricultural sector cannot be established in fact or as an essential truth. When the National Firearm Agreement was rolled out I suspect I know what happened in Queensland, because there are states such as New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania who have quite sophisticated grazing enterprises and there are no such licences in any of those jurisdictions—none whatsoever—but apparently in Queensland the possession of a high-powered handgun is an essential tool of trade. I do not see that. I have said that in the Queensland parliament. That personal view has not—

Mr MANDER: You besmirched the primary producers when you said that.

CHAIR: Stop your interjections, member for Everton.

Mr BYRNE: I am not besmirching anyone. I am making the argument that, if this is an essential tool of agricultural production, why is Queensland so unique? It is not necessary in any other jurisdiction of Australia.

Mr MANDER: You are changing things.

Mr BYRNE: I am not changing anything; I am making an observation. One might go back and interrogate how in 1996 the National Firearm Agreement was subverted by members of the government then in order to get compliance. How is it that we ended up with a category H weapons licensing arrangement? The fact is that you are arguing the indefensible. You are suggesting that weapons licensing are not doing their duty exactly as we would expect, and I find that insulting to the Queensland Police Service. If anyone has a case to answer it is you, member for Everton.

CHAIR: Member for Mount Isa.

Mr KATTER: Minister, page 12 of the SDS details the administrative responsibilities of the department. As you know, licensed firearm dealers broker sales between private individuals which means that front-line police do not spend their valuable time on administrative duties. Has the government estimated the value of this service provided by the private sector?

Mr BYRNE: I understand the licensing of firearm dealers and I understand their necessary compliance with their licence conditions. They are required to comply with their license conditions in order to be licensed dealers.

Mr KATTER: The question is: is there an estimated value of that service which is provided by the private sector?

Mr BYRNE: No, there would not be and there is no need to be. In order to become a dealer you accept the conditions of the licence, and the licence specifies what activities you will undertake as a licensed dealer. In order to be a licensed dealer you accept those responsibilities under the conditions of the licence, and that is the way it is.

Mr KATTER: Under the act if there is a threshold crossed in terms of distance from a dealer then it becomes the responsibility of the QPS to deal with the transfer of the firearm, so it is a question of knowing the value of that service if it is not otherwise there.

Mr BYRNE: I disagree.

Mr KATTER: Do you disagree that it does become the responsibility of the QPS service?

Mr BYRNE: Whatever the provisions in the act state. In order to become a licensed dealer you sign up for the conditions that are associated with the licence, and that function is part of you accepting the responsibility that goes with being a licensed dealer. It is visible up-front, and an applicant accepts that in order to take those provisions forward.

Mr KATTER: A service is provided there by the private sector if it is not there—

Mr BYRNE: It is a condition of being a licensed dealer; you do not have a choice. If you want to be a licensed dealer, member for Mount Isa, you accept that responsibility. If you do not accept those responsibilities you are not a licensed dealer.

Mr KATTER: It is good to have that on the record. Page 5 of the Queensland Police Service SDS in the departmental overview describes an expected 'reduction in community confidence and engagement in policing.' In order to confront this, particularly among licensed firearm owners, I understand that the minister's office has announced a weapons consultation forum. I would like to firstly ask what the expected cost of that forum will be and what role will it have on future policy?

Mr BYRNE: It is a consultation forum. There is no budget line item funding a consultation forum. It is not a budget appropriation. It is not a budget line item. It is absorbed and it is not relevant to the Appropriation Bill. It is not an appropriation item.

Mr KATTER: You are saying that there is no need to comment on the future that it would have on firearms policy?

Mr BYRNE: It is an advisory forum. It is a forum for consultation. For the member's benefit, and as I have said before on the public record, there is a review of a National Firearm Agreement being undertaken which is auspiced by the federal government. That was somewhat delayed, in my view, as a result of the recent election campaign, but that review is underway. It is completely auspiced under the federal arrangement and there is a consultative arrangement built in under the federal architecture. Coincidental and paralleling that, there is a review of the weapons regulations in Queensland which is a statutory requirement. It is not initiated by this government; it is not initiated for any other reason. It is a statutory requirement to undertake a regulatory review of the Weapons Act.

There has been no advice brought forward to me at this point about any adjustments to weapons regulations. I would imagine there may well be some, because there have been quite a few representations over time about things that could be done to improve the current licensing

arrangements or processes. They are not set in stone by any stretch, and a regulatory view does exactly what it is required to do. That is being conducted by the Queensland Police Service. It is not motivated or driven by myself as minister or as a government policy. When that review is mature there will be, or may not be, recommendations that come to government. If those recommendations have substantive implications, it is certainly my intention to make sure that that consultation mechanism, the forum, is well and truly engaged in the process and potentially stakeholders will be on that, because I am sure the representative elements that are encapsulated under the current membership will be informed.

There is no Machiavellian policy setting here, member for Mount Isa. What there is are two parallel activities going forward. One is under the Commonwealth jurisdiction. Our commitment as a state is to maintain a consistency with the National Firearm Agreement. If there is one thing that John Howard did that was incredibly worthy, it was the National Firearm Agreement as a result of circumstances which should have horrified all of us. I am absolutely committed to the maintenance of the National Firearm Agreement. I would like to see more compliance with the National Firearm Agreement. This government will continue to invest and support the National Firearm Agreement. The regulatory review that is underway is statutory. Should there be any matters discussed, we will be discussing them with that forum.

Mr KATTER: One last point—and this is really the whole point—is that the consultation forum was set up post giving a response to the National Firearms Agreement. Whether you agree with the positions or not, consultation was not there with the industry and participants before that if the forum was not set up. Would it not have been the opportune time to put that before giving the response?

Mr BYRNE: The individual that has been very vocal about this that you know very well is already on the consultative forum for the federal review of the National Firearms Agreement, so I do not know what more direct access he who shall remain nameless at this point needs. He is on the committee. He is on the federal review of the National Firearms Agreement, so I do not know why you are sitting in this chamber raving on about that. The fact is that those representative groups already have access to the NFA process through the Commonwealth auspice.

Mr KATTER: That is acknowledged, Minister, but before forming their view to take to the National Firearms Agreement would the government not want to consult with these groups to give themselves the full picture before they gave a response, not just those people or those groups—

Mr BYRNE: The consultation for the National Firearms Agreement is the responsibility of the federal government, not the state government. In terms of the firearms regulations and Weapons Act that exists under that architecture, yes, that is my responsibility. Should there be any changes to regulation or any proposed moves forward in the act in Queensland, I will be engaging those stakeholders in the forum.

CHAIR: Minister, I want to ask you some questions with respect to—and you did comment about this in your opening statement—BWV cameras. I think you said that around 260 were being provided by the Palaszczuk government in that investment. Can you go into the new technologies of body worn video cameras and what are the benefits for officer safety in that regard and public confidence in terms of that particular provision?

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair. There were a few more than 260. It was 2,200.

CHAIR: Sorry.

Mr BYRNE: Our government remains committed to providing police with the technology and equipment that they need to keep Queenslanders safe. Body worn video cameras support police, whether they are Road Policing Command or local general duties officers, to capture evidence, create a record of operational activity and record their interactions with offenders and members of the public. The government has approved funding of \$6.3 million over three years to provide body worn cameras to front-line police. \$1 million has been provided this financial year on top of the \$4 million already provided in 2015-16, with another \$1.03 million allocated for 2017-18.

Today I was pleased to announce the rollout of the 2,200 new body worn cameras to complement the existing 500 already in use on the Gold Coast and Road Policing Command. Front-line officers at key locations across 26 South-East Queensland, Central Queensland and North Queensland police stations will be equipped with cameras to assist them in dealing with serious incidents such as alcohol fuelled violence and domestic and family violence through enhanced evidence gathering. Specialist teams including tactical crime units, rapid action and patrol groups, the Railway Squad, Dog Squad and Road Policing Command will also benefit from these body worn video cameras.

The rollout is expected to be completed by November this year. We know that body worn cameras will make a substantial difference. The use of evidence captured will lead to a reduction in the number of cases proceeding to court. We believe it will also change the behaviour of people interacting with police in certain circumstances. For those that do proceed to court, the clear and quality evidence captured by these cameras can help establish the identity of offenders and the facts of the matter. Overseas research has shown that people's behaviours change when they know they are being recorded during police interactions. It can also lead to fewer complaints lodged against police, which I am sure it will, and when the person lodges a complaint body worn video provides the ability to review the footage and better enable the facts to be determined.

Significantly, the strategic approach taken in developing the standing offer arrangement for this contract means that other government agencies can also purchase body worn camera devices without the need to go through individual evaluation and procurement processes. In short, this is a smart investment in smart technologies to create a stronger, smarter Police Service in Queensland.

Mr Mander interjected.

CHAIR: No, you do not have the call.

Mr BROWN: Minister, I refer you to page 5 of the SDS which refers to the need for new approaches to target the growth, diversity and complexity of organised crime. What initiatives are the government and the QPS undertaking to build the service's capacity to engage and deter organised crime in this state?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. I recognise the ongoing challenge that organised crime presents to our state. Globally, we know that organised crime entities continue to expand and diversify in illicit commodities while exploiting new technologies to further their criminal activities. These entities are flexible in terms of their operational structure, at times operating outside of Queensland, and are innovative in infiltrating legitimate businesses to launder criminal proceeds. This seriously affects the wellbeing of families and has a significant impact on Queensland communities, and this government is serious about cracking down on organised crime activities.

A highly skilled and well-equipped Police Service of nearly 12,000 officers is our first line of defence against organised crime. These officers need our support and we are delivering it. We are proposing \$39.1 million in increased funding over four years to the Queensland Police Service, starting with \$7.9 million in 2016-17. This funding will ensure the Queensland Police Service has the resources to implement the government's response to the Queensland Organised Crime Commission of Inquiry report. As a flow-on, police will use funding to undertake operational and intelligence driven activities, legislative reform and education and training. These operational and expenditure measures will be complemented by a new and effective legal framework to tackle organised crime.

Police continue to target serious and organised crime and are producing excellent results through dedicated task forces and ongoing collaboration with other law enforcement partners, government agencies and the broader community. Because crime does not respect state or national borders, the Organised Crime Investigation Unit detects and prevents organised crime in partnership with other law enforcement agencies including interstate police, the Australian Crime Commission, Australian Border Force, the Australian Federal Police and the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission.

To ensure a united response to the investigation of organised crime, the Queensland Police Service has also established the Queensland Operations Coordination Committee. The committee has a charter to prioritise and support the investigation of organised criminal organisations which pose the greatest risk to the Queensland community. The coordination of operational activities and information sharing enables the formation of multiagency task forces. These task forces combine the legal, financial and technical capabilities of partner agencies to specifically target organised criminal entities. Between 1 January 2015 and 23 May 2016 the unit arrested 45 people on 239 charges in connection with serious and organised crime.

Other significant investigations combating organised crime are being undertaken by the QPS and include operations North White, focused on unlawful bookmaking; Kilo Zurich, which has a focus on public sector corruption and interstate criminals; and North Invoice, investigating the drug ice. Notable seizures during Operation North Invoice included 100 kilograms of cannabis and 10 kilograms of ice.

The Queensland Police Service is also actively engaged in targeting crime facilitated by the internet and fraud. This is achieved in partnership with local, interstate and international law enforcement agencies, financial institutions and the information technology industry. The people of Queensland can be assured that the Queensland Police Service is well positioned to target the growth, diversity and complexity of organised crime.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS which refers to the expanded opportunities for community consultation and engagement with police. I ask if the minister can advise the committee of the progress of the community policing boards initiative and the boards' role in promoting greater integration between the service and the communities they serve.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for Lytton for the question. Our government is one that is committed to consultation. Our commitment recognises that institutions themselves should be open to community views, and that includes the Queensland Police Service. Our government recognises that community participation and support is integral to the success of our Queensland police. To this end, we took a promise to the last election to create community policing boards to give local people a say on local crime issues. We have committed more than \$400,000 to deliver this important initiative. I am pleased to report that community policing boards have now been established in all 15 police districts across the state and are beginning to tackle local matters.

The community policing boards concept offers a fresh approach and opportunity for local organisations and individuals to work with police on strategies to address crime and safety issues in their local communities. These boards also support the Queensland Police Service's commitment to working with the community and other key partners to reduce crime.

The broad objectives of the community policing boards are as follows: promote community safety and security; look at strategies to address issues associated with crime and community safety; identify opportunities to integrate services at a local level; develop partnerships to support government, industry and community working together; and promote evidence based solutions. The boards are represented by a cross-section of their communities and include local police and community representatives from the likes of the not-for-profit sector, local businesses, chambers of commerce, local government, state and government agencies and other individuals who can help address specific issues. With a minimum of four board meetings to be held in each police district every year, there is an opportunity for the community to not only raise issues but also be part of the solution in partnership with their local police.

Tackling domestic and family violence is one of the government's highest priorities and will be a mandatory consideration for every community policing board across the state. We expect the community policing boards may organically evolve over time, taking on a broader focus, becoming a transparent portal between the police district and the community, providing real-time solutions and feedback on contemporary issues. The boards build on community crime prevention frameworks that are already in place including Neighbourhood Watch, community consultative committees, Crime Stoppers and multifaith and Indigenous community and police consultative groups. These prevention activities are important to local communities across Queensland. They deliver property safety and security strategies, deliver cultural diversity awareness programs and help foster stronger ties with young people, the elderly and people from different cultures. It is about working together in partnership to create safe, caring and connected communities right across Queensland.

CHAIR: Minister, with respect to page 5 of the SDS with respect to terrorism and the prospect of disruption to major events, can you advise the committee what investment the government is making in infrastructure and training for QPS officers to bolster their ability to confront terrorism?

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair, for the question. This government is committed to ensuring the safety of the Queensland community and its visitors. That is why I am pleased to announce in this year's budget an extra \$16.2 million over four years to enhance QPS's counterterrorism capabilities. We know that police are at the fore in identifying and countering the threat of terrorism in our state. That is why we are investing in smarter infrastructure and planning to bolster officers' ability to respond. We are making up to \$5 million available to Building Queensland through the Queensland Police Service to develop a business case for a counterterrorism and community safety training centre on the Westgate police site at Wacol.

Such a facility would provide the Queensland Police Service and its emergency services and community safety partners with a purpose-built facility for 24-7 emergency response training. A training facility of this nature would help to ensure that the Queensland Police Service has the capacity and capability to deal with current counterterrorism, actual terrorism threats and high-risk situations. It is anticipated that the facility would also be available for use by other agencies, such as Queensland Corrective Services, the Australian Federal Police, the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Queensland Ambulance Service and Queensland Health.

The Queensland Police Service also conducts counterterrorism awareness training workshops. The QPS has developed an online training program for front-line police to recognise and report early indicators of radicalisation. Additionally, the QPS detective training program is preparing a nationally accredited counterterrorism training workshop for investigators. We will continue to monitor and remain apprised of these programs in line with our commitment to keep Queenslanders safe.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 5 of the QPS SDS in relation to upholding the law. My question is directed to the Police Commissioner. Can the commissioner advise the committee on how many hours of police time was spent on the investigation into allegations against the former Labor MP Billy Gordon?

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you for that question. No, I do not have that readily available to me. Obviously, we receive complaints of various natures. Some are politically sensitive and we investigate them thoroughly and rigorously, as we do every complaint that is given to us.

Mr MANDER: Is it possible to get that figure?

Commissioner Stewart: We could certainly get an estimate of that. It might take a small amount of time. Could I just clarify? Are you talking about complaints made against the member, Mr Gordon, not activities that the police have taken on their own bat, for instance, the fact that he was charged with traffic offences recently?

Mr MANDER: The allegations, not the convictions—the allegations made by members of the public.

Commissioner Stewart: Certainly. Thank you. I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr BYRNE: I am a little uncomfortable. Allegations are made.

CHAIR: So am I.

Mr BYRNE: Hoovering up particular amounts of money for the Queensland Police Service to undertake its duties, these are operational—

Mr MANDER: You are accountable and transparent.

Mr BYRNE: There is an allegation made and an investigation is undertaken. That investigation goes as long and as hard as it needs to go.

Mr MANDER: That is true.

Mr BYRNE: Under the guidance of the Police Commissioner.

Mr MANDER: I just simply want to know.

Mr BYRNE: It is not something where you sit down and do a dollar attribution of every investigation.

Mr MANDER: I have asked the commissioner and he said that it is possible.

Mr BYRNE: So you want the Queensland Police Service to waste time and money? Do you want us to give you price of what that inquiry cost?

Mr MANDER: I am not talking about wasting time and money. I have a similar question to the Police Commissioner about the number of hours of police time that was spent in investigation against the allegations against the former minister for police, the member for Bundamba, Jo-Ann Miller. I have a similar question on how many hours of police time was spent on the investigation into allegations against the Labor member for Pumicestone, Rick Williams. I have a similar question to the commissioner about how many hours of police time was spent on the investigation into allegations against you, police minister, the member for Rockhampton. I believe that the public deserves to know how much police resources are being devoted to allegations against members and former members of your government.

Mr BYRNE: I will put it to you this way. The Police Service undertakes investigations as it needs to under the law. The only reason you are asking this question is politics. What I might say—

Mr MANDER: I am asking you because—

Mr BYRNE: No, there is no public interest test whatsoever.

Mr MANDER: Of course there is.

Mr BYRNE: I will give you the price for what the investigation into your question is. How about that? How much Queensland Police Service time do you want to waste running around telling you how much an inquiry cost that you called for. The Liberal National Party calls for the inquiry and then you want to know how much it cost. If you do not want to spend the money, do not make the allegation.

Mr MANDER: You keep claiming that you are transparent and accountable. This is a simple question. I have asked the commissioner whether it is possible. He said that he can provide an approximate. I would like to know how many hours have been spent into the investigation of those members.

Mr BYRNE: If the commissioner wants to take it on and that rocks your boat, let us go there.

Mr MANDER: Does that concern you at all with regard to the number of resources that have been allocated to investigating members of your government?

Mr BYRNE: Police undertake their responsibilities. That is why we appropriate operational funding. What is the counterpoint? We are not going to undertake an investigation because we think that it is going to cost too much? Is that the argument? What is the point that you are trying to make here? The Liberal National Party made allegations in a number of these cases, demanded investigations and now you want to know how much it costs. Do not make the demand for the investigation. The police will do and pursue investigations independently as they always should and the political agenda and opportunism here is evident to every Queenslander.

Mr MANDER: I will take those questions on notice. Thank you. I refer to page 57 of the SDS in relation to new and replacement police vehicles. I seek leave to table a newspaper report from the *Courier-Mail*. Commissioner, the question is to you.

CHAIR: Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

Mr MANDER: Commissioner, I am sure you are aware of this particular newspaper report, where Inala police officers claim they are using bicycles because of a car shortage. Are you concerned by these reports?

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you, sir. I appreciate the question. Yes, I was aware of this article that has been provided and the quotes in there. I think if I start off by simply saying that—

CHAIR: Before you proceed, commissioner, that is asking for an opinion. I will just ask you to respond accordingly to your best ability to answer that part of the question that does not offend standing orders, thanks.

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you for that advice, chair. If you are asking me do we have enough vehicles for our police officers, the answer is yes.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, commissioner. Minister, why in this year's budget is there only an additional 10 new cars this financial year whereas in the last year of the LNP government there were 46?

Mr BYRNE: What is the point you are trying to make? The commissioner has just said that we have adequate vehicles for the Queensland Police Service. Vehicle management is very tightly managed within the Queensland Police Service. There is a time management structure that sits over the appropriation and replacement process for the various types of vehicles that exist within the Queensland Police Service.

The answer to question on notice No. 3, I think, goes in some way to explain what the proposals are within the budget for vehicles and the management of vehicles more broadly. The fact is that the Queensland Police Service is supplied with the vehicles that it seeks. The decisions about replacements are managed, as they should be, internally. You have just heard the Queensland Police Commissioner tell you that the Queensland Police Service has an adequate supply of vehicles to undertake its duties. I am not sure what else I can do to illuminate that for you.

Mr MANDER: You are not concerned at all about individual police officers claiming that they have to ride bicycles to work or to jobs because of a police car shortage?

Mr BYRNE: What I am concerned about is does the Queensland Police Service have adequate vehicles. I am advised, as you are, by the Queensland Police Commissioner that the answer is yes. What are you saying? That the Queensland Police Commissioner is lying to you—misleading you in the committee? If that is what you are suggesting—

Mr MANDER: I was referring to comments that individual police officers have made and I am asking you about whether—

Mr BYRNE: I can only go based on fact, not by media reports from unidentified individuals who may or may not have some other agenda running. What I can say is the advice that I receive and what I respond to is professional advice from the people who are sitting behind me. My job is to go into the

budget process and make sure that the resources are there to meet the operational requirements. As you just had stated from the commissioner, those requirements are met. I am not interested in speculation that shows up in the media cycle. If I spent my life running around worrying about upsetting the media, I would never get any work done.

Mr MANDER: It is not the media; it is the unions that are claiming this, Minister. Have they made this request to you?

Mr BYRNE: I cannot illuminate this issue any more.

CHAIR: Minister, I am not going to entertain this any further. The response has been given by the commissioner. I will request you to move on to your next question, member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 6 of the Police SDS in relation to organised crime. The question is to you, commissioner. Can you explain how the anti-association provisions of the 2013 legislation have helped the police prevent and disrupt organised crime, particularly criminal motorcycle gangs on the Gold Coast?

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you, sir. If I understand your question, you are asking about the new laws?

Mr MANDER: No, I am asking you about the laws that were brought in in 2014 that referred to anti-association and I am asking you about how has that helped police prevent and disrupt organised crime, particularly criminal motorcycle gangs?

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you. I am on the record as saying that I believe that the anti-association laws did work for us here in Queensland. They certainly assisted police in doing their job at the time. Since that time, though, and since the change of government, there have been three separate inquiries or task forces set up by the government to look at organised crime more broadly. As a result of those inquiries, there have been certain recommendations made, particularly the recommendations of the Byrne report.

You may recall, sir, that the Byrne report talked about the need for the police to broaden their focus—not just to be on outlaw motorcycle gang members engaged in organised crime, but organised crime types and perpetrators more broadly and we have taken that on board. There have also been recommendations about changes to the legislation. I have been on the record to say that I support the government of the day's potential new legislation, because it has not yet been finalised. I support that on the basis that the government has said that that legislation will be the strongest in Australia to attack organised crime in all of its forms.

We have been given an undertaking by the Premier that the Queensland Police Service will be part of the drafting process and that is occurring. We have a team of senior and specialist police who are working with the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in developing the draft legislation for consideration through the normal process—the cabinet process and the parliamentary process.

As I said, I have been on the record—and I do not shy away from that—to say that the previous laws did work and they were strong, they were helpful. I am adamant that, if the new laws are strong and the strongest in the country, then that will make Queensland a safer place from organised crime.

Mr MANDER: Thanks, commissioner. I accept your acknowledgement of the success of the anti-association provisions. I am quite interested in some specific details. Can you explain the benefit of the stop, search and detain powers that were contained in the 2013 legislation and explain how they have especially helped police, particularly Task Force Maxima, in disrupting and preventing organised crime in Queensland?

Commissioner Stewart: Thank you again for that question. I have specialists here who can talk to that as well if you want further information. Certainly, the stop, search and detain powers were a key factor and I would hope that the new legislation will contain similar types of powers to allow us to continue our efforts in that regard. Police must always act within the law and always act reasonably, fairly and objectively. Could I raise the issue that the fight against organised crime in this state over the last few years, including in more recent times, has been a whole-of-service approach.

Whilst we have one task force which had primary carriage of some of the work, which was Maxima, there was a far broader focus on organised crime more generally and again, as I said, that has broadened since the recent inquiries, particularly into the area of boiler room fraud or cold-call investment fraud, as it is also called, and organised crime's involvement in the sale of child exploitation material. Certainly all of the service has benefited from the previous strong legislation and I look forward to seeing the new legislation and being part of that.

Mr MANDER: I will go to the minister. Hearing the assertions from the commissioner about the stop, detain and search laws and the anti-association laws, surely the government could not consider winding back those aspects of the laws?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. I am not going to give any indication of what might be presented to the Queensland parliament. The Premier has made a very, very clear set of statements. I think probably the most important thing for the committee to consider is that when the recent task force handed down its report, and while the Premier and I were attending a press conference, we had representatives of outlaw motorcycle gangs in front of the Executive Building accusing the Labor government of being worse than the Newman government. It may be the only occasion in my political career that I would be very pleased to be described as worse than the Newman government, when it comes to dealing with outlaw motorcycle gangs. That is the reaction that has been received immediately.

Mr MANDER: Your actions will show it.

Mr BYRNE: Well, that is the reaction. The Premier has made it very clear about some of the up-front outcomes that we expect from this review. That body of work is occurring in the background. I am not going to cherry-pick or speculate about the package that will come out, other than to can assure the committee and the people of Queensland that these laws will be more effective. They will pull on organised crime in a fashion we have not been able to before and they will do it within a framework that is consistent with prospects of High Court challenges. I was standing up in 2012 in the Queensland parliament—it has already been reflected on in this committee hearing about things that were said in 2012—begging the then Newman government to do something about bikies and what did I receive?

Mr MANDER: And it worked. We responded and it worked.

Mr BYRNE: I received admonishment and ridicule from those now in opposition for even making out this point was an issue. What did I receive? I got analogies of bikie gang colours being the equivalent of football colours. I was told there was absolutely no problem. We have one incident on the Gold Coast and the Liberal National Party government go from sitting down with organised crime figures—bikie representatives—when they were in opposition to all of a sudden this overreaction that gets driven through the House in three hours. I was present through this journey. I have been completely consistent.

Mr CRANDON: Just one incident on the Gold Coast?

Mr BYRNE: That is what happened. There was one incident on the Gold Coast and there was this overreaction.

Mr Crandon interjected.

CHAIR: Order! You will allow the minister to answer the question. You asked the question.

Mr BYRNE: And even leading up to that bill coming to the House there were these statements made by the then government that they would consult with the opposition, given that I had been so clear in my concerns about the matter, and what did that consultation translate to? We received the bill something like 3½ hours before we had to debate it in the House as a rushed, urgent bill.

The point is that I have been absolutely consistent in my views about bikies and organised crime more broadly since day one in my political life. Not once have I wavered. I have not said one minute, 'I am a civil libertarian,' and next thing roll out the most draconian legislation in the world. I have not approached this as a political opportunity, as those in the opposition have. I have approached this as a set of measures that need to be brought in to make Queensland safe. That is the commitment that the Premier has given. When the bill comes to the House it will be fully ventilated via normal parliamentary processes and consultation. I would encourage the opposition members of the committee to avail themselves of that opportunity when it matures.

Mr BROWN: I refer to page 6 of the SDS. Will the minister update the committee on the current national threat level and provide advice on any investment the government is making to improve the QPS counterterrorism capability?

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. Most on the committee would know that the threat level in Australia and Queensland is 'probable'. Credible intelligence indicates that individuals or groups have developed both intent and capability to conduct a terrorist attack in Australia. However, there is no known specific threat to Queensland. Radicalisation and recruitment of Australians is increasing, influenced by extreme messaging from terrorist groups who have been active online spreading violent ideology and channelling persuasive propaganda to susceptible, vulnerable and easily influenced individuals.

There is concern in the community about this issue, especially following continued police operations throughout Australia. The QPS is actively monitoring discriminatory, harassing, bullying or other violent behaviours towards members of our communities, including the Islamic community. Officers continue to develop and have excellent relationships with the local Islamic communities, allowing for a high level of cooperation. The Queensland Police Service, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation work in collaboration to identify and investigate security concerns. These agencies collaborate through the Queensland Tri-Agency Security Intelligence Group, which ensures coordination between the three agencies in triaging and evaluating suspicious activity and reporting that, and the Joint Counterterrorism Team, which undertakes security investigations. The QPS has recently injected further resources into the JC team to proactively enhance and strengthen the joint response to the threat of terrorism in Queensland.

Within the QPS, the estimated 2016-17 budget for the Security and Counterterrorism Group within the Intelligence Counterterrorism and Major Events Command is \$11.638 million. This is up from \$7.7 million in the 2015-16 financial year. The 2016-17 budget includes \$4.1 million as part of a four-year \$16.2 million commitment by the Palaszczuk government to enhance the Queensland Police Service's ability to case-manage and assess persons of interest and counter violent extremism. The QPS has also implemented the Security and Counterterrorism Network. The network has trained key QPS personnel in each of the 15 districts providing a strengthened and coordinated approach to investigations, intelligence and priority site identifications.

The QPS has also adopted a range of community engagement strategies to alleviate ongoing community tensions. This includes maintaining a number of well-attended engagement and support forums to provide the community with the opportunity to engage directly with both local and senior executive members of the Queensland Police Service in a spirit of collaboration and trust. These forums have also resulted in the development of a number of resources specifically for Arabic-speaking communities. This includes the appointment of police liaison officers to specifically engage the Muslim and Arabic-speaking communities and the recent advertisement of two new permanent senior community engagement positions to engage and support communities and key stakeholders within Islamic communities.

In line with its responsibility for preventing and responding to terrorism, the QPS has continued its strong focus on developing its counterterrorism capabilities and capacity. The Queensland Counterterrorism Training and Exercise Management Committee currently coordinates the annual counterterrorism training and exercise program in Queensland. Approval to establish the Queensland Combating Violent Extremism Intervention Program was given by cabinet on 8 February 2016. Establishment of the program is being led by the Queensland Police Service on behalf of the Queensland government. The Queensland Counterterrorism Committee has commenced overseeing this program.

On 19 April 2016 the government introduced the Counter-Terrorism and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 into the Queensland parliament. The bill will amend, among others, the Public Safety Preservation Act 1986 and the Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2005. This will enhance public safety by augmenting counterterrorism and emergency management powers, ensuring police can rapidly and effectively respond to and resolve emergencies. As I said earlier, the government is also providing funding of up to \$5 million in 2016-17 for the business case to develop counterterrorism.

CHAIR: I would like to ask you some questions around road safety in regard to page 10 of the SDS. Could you explain to the committee what the QPS is doing in undertaking to promote road safety in the areas of Mount Glorious and Mount Nebo in order to achieve 'Mount Zero' for fatalities and road trauma?

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair, for the question. I know that you have been a champion of road safety in your electorate, which stretches beyond the Samford Valley to our local mountain ranges. Mount Zero is a coordinated road safety initiative targeting motorcycle crashes, hooning and risky driving behaviours on mountain roads in the Mount Nebo, Mount Glorious and, more recently, the Mount Coot-tha areas. The initiative is aimed at reducing injury crashes on mountain roads by coordinating community partnerships, enhancing intelligence and community engagement and coordinating operational policing activity. Mount Zero has been developed as a joint initiative between The Gap Neighbourhood Watch committee and the Queensland Police Service Inner West Patrol Group. It contributes to the QPS commitment to make Queensland safer, including reducing road trauma, in partnership with the community.

A Mount Zero committee has also recently been established which includes representatives of The Gap NHW, Mount Glorious and Nebo residents associations, Department of Transport and Main Roads representatives, the Inner West Patrol Group police and representatives from both Brisbane City and Moreton Bay local councils. The committee meets regularly and provides an opportunity for the development of joint strategies to address and promote road safety. I commend the coordinator of the group, our chair, for his efforts in this area.

An important aspect of this initiative is promoting an awareness of the harms and impacts road crashes can have to road users, the community and other relevant stakeholders. To this end, monthly community engagement activities are held on the mountain road network by the Queensland Police Service and their partners. These provide an informal atmosphere for police to engage road users and promote road safety. The local police from the Inner West Patrol Group and Indooroopilly Road Policing Command Unit provide a highly visible policing presence on mountain road networks.

Significant resources have also been provided by the Road Policing Command to supplement the local policing response. The Mount Zero initiative is a long-term initiative with a strong sense of community ownership. Mount Zero is also underpinned by the acknowledgement that promoting road safety is a joint responsibility for all road users. I am pleased to say that Mount Zero has already been recognised for its significant contribution to road safety by being awarded the Queensland Road Safety Community Award in 2015.

CHAIR: For the record, can I commend the officers from not only Indooroopilly but also Ferny Grove for the excellent work they do out in that area. They are highly respected in the community. Keeping with page 10 of the SDS, what resources are the government providing to the QPS to promote safe driving behaviours and to deter people from unlawful activity on the roads?

Mr BYRNE: The government is committed to road safety and making our roads safer for all road users. The Queensland Police Service works to support this by implementing a range of enforcement and community education measures, including speed and red-light cameras, random breath testing and roadside drug testing, non-camera police on-road speed enforcement, automatic number plate recognition technology, vehicle impoundment and immobilisation activities, high-visibility policing, and national, state and localised road policing operations. Speeding and drink and drug driving, not wearing a seatbelt, driving while fatigued, and driver distraction and inattention make up the fatal five high-risk road user behaviours that are targeted on a regular basis by police to improve the safety for all road users.

I am advised that in 2015-16, over 3.91 million random breath tests were conducted, with approximately 19,200 drink-driving offences detected; 219,989 speeding infringement notices, excluding camera detected offences were issued; 10,853 infringement notices were issued for not wearing seatbelts; 18,913 infringement notices were issued for using mobile phones; and 49,445 roadside saliva tests were undertaken, with 9,751 drivers testing positive to one or more relevant drugs, which equated to one offender in five tests. In response, the Queensland Police Service has expanded its roadside drug testing and the capability that goes with it, with an additional 131 officers trained to perform testing, taking the total number of trained officers to 407. To assist in statistical recording, research, intelligence gathering and productivity, a mobile IT solution has been developed that greatly assists front-line officers.

I cannot stress enough how important it is that we all remember that road safety is everyone's responsibility and to act accordingly. The QPS's hoon hotline provides Queenslanders with an easy-to-remember central contact point to report drivers behaving in a dangerous, reckless or antisocial way on Queensland roads. From 2015-16, 9,211 calls from the public were answered on this service and a further 6,525 reports from the public were received online. The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 includes tough penalties for people committing hooning offences in Queensland. Offenders who commit two type 1 hooning offences in five years are eligible to have their vehicle forfeited to the state. Offenders who commit four or more type 2 offences within five years are also eligible for vehicle forfeiture. During 2014-15, there were 2,777 vehicles impounded, 9,221 vehicles immobilised and 2,030 vehicles eligible for forfeiture. Between 1 July 2015 and 26 May 2016, there were 1,957 vehicles impounded, 9,483 vehicles immobilised and 2,507 vehicles eligible for forfeiture.

As a further deterrent to speeding, the government has allocated \$5.2 million over the 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years to progress the installation of 10 combined red-light with speed cameras and four new point-to-point average speed cameras. A further \$1.5 million has been allocated over the 2015-16 and 2016-17 financial years to implement a new enforcement strategy at high-risk

intersections, including roadworks, school zones and managed motorways. In May 2016, the QPS implemented a new mobile speed camera scheduling system to improve the deployment of cameras at high-risk sections of road. The new scheduling system incorporates functionality that utilises a full suite of evidence based intelligence, with a place-and-case management approach. You can see the considerable efforts that we are making as a government in terms of road safety.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Lytton, we have time for one very brief question and answer.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I refer to page 6 of the SDS about the QPS and its role in reducing domestic and family violence on vulnerable persons in Queensland. Could you advise how the QPS is addressing the scourge of domestic and family violence in Queensland?

Mr BYRNE: Tackling domestic violence and family violence is one of the government's highest priorities. Violence has no place in the lives of Queenslanders and we are determined that it does not take hold of another generation. The Queensland Police Service is playing an active role in implementing a number of strategies to combat domestic violence in our communities, in conjunction with partner agencies. The QPS is the lead agency for eight recommendations from the special task force on domestic violence report, *Not now, not ever—Putting an end to domestic violence in Queensland*, and has already completed three of those recommendations. Victims of domestic violence are accessing their right to protection and safety, and are gaining courage and confidence in the system to report incidents of domestic and family violence to the police. This government is determined that perpetrators of domestic violence are held accountable for their actions.

The government is also providing the QPS with funding for a number of important domestic and family violence response activities. This includes increased funding of \$5.1 million over four years to enable the QPS to undertake coordination activities to support high-risk teams delivering an integrated response to domestic and family violence. Through these teams, an interagency response will be provided for high-risk—

Mr MANDER: Chair, can we get the short response?

CHAIR: If you keep interjecting, it will be a longer response. I am allocating the same time as I provided you.

Mr BYRNE: If you are not interested in what the government is doing budget-wise with domestic violence, I suppose I can understand that.

CHAIR: Please continue, Minister.

Mr BYRNE: The stance taken by this government is one that needs to be put on the public record and reinforced. The program that we are running in support of the *Not now, not ever* report will help police better understand the complexities that underpin domestic and family violence and build skills to better engage with victims. The QPS is also supporting the implementation of a number of joint-agency recommendations, including recommendation No. 9 and No. 74 related to the development and implementation of the domestic and family violence integrated response trials across three trial sites at Logan/Beenleigh, Mount Isa and an Indigenous community. A range of additional related recommendations will also be considered in the development and implementation of the trials, including the development of common risk assessment frameworks. These are important trials.

The QPS is also participating in a review of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2012. This review is examining ways to enhance the protection of victims, particularly in ensuring that protection is both timely and comprehensive. Potential improvements to the police protection notices have been identified as a key activity for this review. The government also introduced a trial of domestic and family violence specialist courts at Southport Magistrates Court in September 2015. The trial has been extended for another 12 months and is supported with increased funding to the Queensland Police Service of \$1.5 million over two years; \$1.6 million of this is provided in 2016-17.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. In the last remaining moments, I will hand over to the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I refer to your recent announcement about funding for the police helicopters for the next six years because of their effectiveness in crime detection and prevention. Does their success make a mockery of your assertions in a committee public hearing of 29 July 2014, and I seek leave to table that, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Firstly, I will get you to withdraw the imputation in the question. If you could rephrase, it would be helpful.

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, thank you. How does this explain your comments in the committee public hearing of 29 July 2014, where you said—

Helicopters strike me as being last century technology, and the sorts of capabilities that are derived from the present aircraft could easily be delivered by unmanned aerial vehicle drones.

Mr BYRNE: I thank the member for the question. They are completely consistent statements. The statement I made in 2014 is exactly what my view is. What is the function of the police helicopter?

Mr MANDER: Yet you are happy to commit another \$30 million to something that you do not think is effective.

Mr BYRNE: If you look at what I said, 'Helicopters strike me as being last century technology', they are. In fact, the platform that we currently have, and this is no criticism of the crews or the effort that is in there, is essentially an airborne three-dimensional observation post using latest technology. The capacity to deliver exactly the same effect, exactly the same product, can be delivered from remotes. There is no question of that. In fact, military applications out there demonstrate that on a daily basis. There are no longer light observation helicopters of that nature flying around battlefields. They are drones and they deliver exactly the same outcomes.

If you are asking me if I am comfortable with the current capability, yes, it is an important capability. If you are asking what the future holds for remotes and surveillance and observation in the policing space, I am absolutely convinced that the use of remotes in some form—three dimensional—will become a norm as the rollout of technology continues. We already have a number of remotes that are operating in specialist domains within the QPS. That is are a matter of public record, with both our counter-terrorism groups and others. We have 14 remote aircraft already. I do not think they are exclusive, but if we look back well beyond my time, we will find that increasingly remote piloted aircraft will replace crude aircraft for the purposes of surveillance and search. That is what happens in the broader world. We are seeing it even in maritime surveillance today, where large-scale strategic maritime surveillance is being undertaken by remotes. Remotes are the way of the future. They will deliver a productivity dividend and they will generate the level of awareness that police require across a much greater reach. That is the way that technology will work.

Mr MANDER: I refer to page 8 of the SDS in relation to crime rates. Can you explain why crime rates in the 2015-16 actual figures have increased from last year, for example, assault is up almost 10 per cent, robbery eight per cent, unlawful entry almost three per cent and motor vehicle theft almost six per cent?

Mr BYRNE: I draw the attention of the member to the downward trend over the cycle, over the past 10 years. The crime statistics are certainly heading, in a trend sense, in a downward direction. As the member would be well aware, there are a variety of factors that influence crime statistics from time to time, not the least of which is some of the social architecture that supports our communities and the role and presence of policing. Some of those numbers are going up, but I do notice, for example, the very dramatic increase in domestic violence numbers in the statistics. Some are incredibly alarming numbers that we see in domestic violence rates in some of our communities. Those numbers are informing other parts of the statistics.

Mr MANDER: Increased robbery, eight per cent?

Mr BYRNE: Certainly there are other environmental issues. Are you asking are we concerned? Of course I am concerned. Are you saying are we taking appropriate steps? Yes, we are. Over trend lines, the crime rate in Queensland is certainly on the way down. There are a variety of factors—

Mr Mander interjected.

Mr BYRNE: Let us just step back a bit: when a similar sort of thing happened with the previous government, what did we see? We stopped publishing crime statistics. As we heard this morning from the Attorney-General, this government is now setting up to publish crime statistics through an independent entity, whatever that is. The Attorney-General is driving that. I was behind the policy, because of this very point: the crime statistics vary in categories for a whole variety of reasons. I could go through what the variety of combinations is. We are publishing crime statistics. We are having community policing boards put in place that give genuine interaction from local communities with the police officers who are charged tactically to respond to these issues. We recognise that these pressures are in the system and we put in place what I believe will be effective measures over time to appropriately target resources.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We have reached the time when we have expired our ability to ask further questions in this portfolio. On behalf of committee members, I thank the Director-General, the CEO, commissioners and other officers for their attendance here today. Minister, I remind you that any outstanding answers to questions taken on notice at today's hearing are due to be provided to the research director by 5 pm on Tuesday 26 July. No doubt you will wish to make some closing remarks?

Mr BYRNE: Thank you, Chair. I reiterate my thanks to the Police Commissioner and all his senior officers, the Public Safety Business Agency Acting CEO Anthony Reilly, others who have been with me through the day, including Department of Justice and Attorney-General Director-General David Mackie, the Queensland Corrective Services Commissioner Mark Rallings, the Queensland Corrective Services Chief Financial Officer, the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Katarina Carroll, Iain MacKenzie from the Inspector-General Emergency Management, senior officers from the department and senior officers from the individual entities. I also thank my own staff, the parliamentary staff, Hansard, the recorders and everyone else. Of course, last but not least, I thank members of the committee for the interrogation of the budget today.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That completes the committee's hearing today. I thank Hansard. A copy of today's proceeding will be available online within the next few hours. On behalf of the committee, I thank officers of the Parliamentary Service for their assistance with today's hearing and fellow committee members for their work and their collaboration in the organisation and running of the hearing today. I declare this hearing closed.

Committee adjourned at 7.31 pm