

WEDNESDAY, 24 JULY 2019

ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE—NATURAL RESOURCES, MINES AND ENERGY

Estimate Committee Members

Mr CG Whiting (Chair)
Mr PT Weir
Mr DJ Batt
Mr JE Madden
Mr BA Mickelberg
Ms JC Pugh

Members in Attendance

Mr MJ Hart
Mr MC Berkman
Mr SSJ Andrew
Ms SL Bolton
Mr Dr Last
Mr AC Powell
Mr AJ Perrett
Mr RI Katter

In Attendance

Hon. AJ Lynham, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
Mr S Zanatta, Chief of Staff
Mr P Woodland, Senior Policy Advisor
Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy
Mr J Purtill, Director-General
Mr B Barr, Deputy Director-General, Policy
Ms K Standen, Deputy Director-General, Energy
Ms L Dobe, Deputy Director-General, Natural Resources
Ms K Platt, Chief Finance Officer
Mr A Feely, Deputy Director-General, Lands
Mr S Ferris, Deputy Director-General, Georesources
Mr M Stone, Executive Director, Resources Safety and Health
Ms B Parker, Deputy Director-General, Business and Corporate Partnership
Energy Queensland Limited
Mr P Scott, Acting Chief Executive Officer

Stanwell Corporation Limited

Mr R Van Breda, Chief Executive Officer

SunWater

Ms N Hollows, Chief Executive Officer

CleanCo Queensland

Mr M George, Interim Chief Executive Officer

The committee met at 9.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare this hearing of estimates for the State Development, Natural Resources and Agricultural Industry Development Committee open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which our parliament sits. I would like to introduce the members of the committee. My name is Chris Whiting, the chair of the committee and the member for Bancroft. Mr Pat Weir is the deputy chair and the member for Condamine. The other committee members are: Mr David Batt, the member for Bundaberg; Mr Jim Madden, the member for Ipswich West; Mr Brent Mickelberg, the member for Buderim; and Ms Jess Pugh, the member for Mount Ommaney. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to ask questions at the hearing today, so other members may be present over the course of the proceedings. Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani, and Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh, are here as well.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2019 and estimates for the committee's area of responsibility. I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as chair by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasters of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photography and video recording of the proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. I also remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in the chamber.

The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: energy from 9.00 am to 10.00; land and water and titles and valuations from 10.00 to 11.00; mining and resources from 11.15 to 12.15; state development and manufacturing from 12.45 to 2.15 pm; infrastructure and planning from 2.30 to 3.45; agricultural industry development from 4.00 to 5.30 pm; and fisheries from 5.45 to 7.15 pm. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, and I welcome the minister. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 12.15 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break from 11.00 to 11.15 am.

The visiting members accepted by the committee are: Mr Tim Mander, the member for Everton; Mr Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana; Mr Andrew Powell, the member for Glass House; Mr Dale Last, the member for Burdekin; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Tony Perrett, the member for Gympie; Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim; Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar; and Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preamble, arguments or opinions. I intend to guide proceedings today so that the relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Minister, the Director-General, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they speak or answer a question referred to them by the Minister or the Director-General. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of natural resources, mines and energy open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Dr LYNHAM: I too would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which this event is taking place today.

The overriding goal of this government's energy policy agenda is to ensure that Queenslanders continue to enjoy our energy trifecta: price, reliability and renewables. Queensland continues to have the lowest average wholesale prices on the eastern seaboard, and that is thanks to our \$2 billion Affordable Energy Plan. Underpinned by public ownership of our electricity assets, this translates to two consecutive years of falling household power bills. We have the nation's youngest fleet of coal-fired power stations and a \$5 billion pipeline of renewable energy projects, 26 of them already generating more than 1,700 megawatts of clean energy with another 900 megawatts committed or underway. That means that more than 4,500 construction jobs have been created and will come to regional areas statewide. We are about to unleash the next wave of renewable energy and regional jobs, with 10 projects competing for contracts to kickstart new regional investments.

As well, Queensland's third publicly owned electricity generator, CleanCo, starts trading in the national electricity market on 31 October. From this date CleanCo takes over the Wivenhoe and Swanbank E power stations near Ipswich and three Far North Queensland hydro power stations. CleanCo will also complete the government's Renewables 400 reverse auction. They are working with 10 shortlisted renewable energy proponents to bring on up to 400 megawatts of renewable generation and storage. Importantly, that means more new jobs building these projects in regional Queensland. CleanCo will seek binding bids from 10 proponents to supply renewable energy and recommend projects to government early next year. This will increase competition and supply in the Queensland electricity market, and that means more downward pressure on electricity prices for all Queensland families. Preliminary analysis indicates that CleanCo should reduce wholesale electricity prices on average by around \$7 per megawatt hour, which is expected to translate to an estimated \$70 per annum saving for the average Queensland household.

This government continues to deliver on power prices. Electricity bills for the typical regional household have decreased by an average of 2.9 per cent a year over the past two years and 4.6 per cent a year for a typical small business. The 2019-20 budget before us includes around \$500 million to ensure that regional Queenslanders pay similar prices for their electricity as customers in South-East Queensland. The Queensland Competition Authority estimates that regional customers would pay between eight per cent and 100 per cent more for their electricity than they currently do depending on where they live. QCA's reporting on the South-East Queensland market has also shown small customer electricity prices falling in 2018-19 and again in 2019-20. In addition, the government continues to invest dividends from its government owned corporations to provide the second of two \$50 asset ownership payments to around two million households.

We recognise that even with these efforts to reduce prices some households will still struggle with their quarterly power bill. Our successful Energy Savvy Families program helps low-income households manage their energy costs. Between October 2018 and December 2019, 4,000 families will benefit from receiving a digital metre, having access to monthly billing, and access to information and advice on simple actions to reduce their energy use and save on their power bills.

In 2020, Queensland will reach the milestone of 20 per cent renewable energy—well on target to achieve this Labor government's target of 50 per cent renewables by 2030. We have the nation's youngest fleet of reliable, efficient coal-fired power stations, with an incoming tide of affordable, renewable generation rolling in behind. Queensland is the nation's energy powerhouse under a Palaszczuk Labor government.

CHAIR: The committee will now examine the portfolio area of energy.

Mr HART: Chair, could I ask some questions of the acting CEO of Energy Queensland please. Mr Scott, as a major government owned enterprise, how are conflicts of interest managed by the Energy Queensland board—in particular, when your chair is a resident of New South Wales and on the board of EDI, a supplier of services to Energy Queensland and a competitor to Yurika, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Queensland; when you have a director who was appointed to the board after a union leader proposed the appointment without applying or going through a formal selection process; when you have another board member whose company is in partnership with a recruiting company that was last year appointed as a major supplier to Energy Queensland; and when you have another board member who is on the board of Genex Power, a fact that is not disclosed on the Energy Queensland corporate website, and Genex is a direct competitor to Yurika, which as I said is a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Queensland?

CHAIR: Let me just start by saying that that is a pretty long preamble for that question. Bear in mind that you almost had a couple of questions in that one. I just point that out to start with but I will allow that question.

Mr Scott: I would have to take that question on notice. I do not have in front of me our broad policy, other than to say that we follow government guidelines in respect of that matter. We could come back to you with a more fulsome answer.

CHAIR: If you want to come back with a more fulsome answer, we can revisit that at the end of the session.

Mr HART: Chair, can I just confirm that the minister will take that on notice—that his CEO cannot answer about conflict of interest?

CHAIR: No. The acting CEO has said that he will get some more information and come back at the end of this session. As you know, the minister is the only person who can take those questions on notice.

Dr LYNHAM: Yes.

Mr HART: The next question is also to the CEO of Energy Queensland. Mr Scott, I refer to the Ignite Employee Recognition Program. Can you advise the percentage of field staff who have not signed up to the program, despite it being heralded as a great success? Can the details be provided of the total amount that was spent on promotion, awards, dinners, flights and accommodation associated with the awards night in Townsville?

Mr Scott: Thank you for your question. I will have to take that on notice also. I do not have the granularity of that detail but we will be able to provide that information during the sitting.

CHAIR: Minister?

Dr LYNHAM: That is fine.

Mr HART: Can I ask the CEO of Stanwell some questions? Mr Van Breda, you remember that last year we were talking about the ministerial direction that was given to Stanwell. Can you confirm if that is still in place?

CHAIR: You are going to have to be a bit more specific, member for Burleigh. Obviously, we are doing some forward examinations, but can we have some more specific details in your question?

Mr HART: Mr Van Breda, Stanwell was under a direction by the minister last year when we spoke at estimates. That direction required Stanwell to enter the market at a certain price, a certain amount of energy, as you told us last year. Can you confirm if that is still in place?

Mr Van Breda: That bidding direction ended on 30 June 2019.

Dr LYNHAM: Can I add to that response?

Mr HART: Well—

CHAIR: We know the direction. This will come off the government time; we have established that. The officer has finished. The minister is furnishing some more information.

Dr LYNHAM: Thank you, Chair. The bidding directions to Stanwell on return to service of Swanbank E Power Station have acted to suppress price volatility as well as to add system security here in the state. The directions to Stanwell, as well as other initiatives under the Powering Queensland Plan, have ensured forward wholesale prices in Queensland were the lowest of the mainland regions in 2018-19. The directions were not published, given they contained commercially sensitive information. However, it is clear that the market received the message that extreme wholesale prices are no longer acceptable. I can confirm that Stanwell is no longer subject to these directions.

CHAIR: Do you have a further question, member for Burleigh?

Mr HART: Yes. Mr Van Breda, can you advise whether Stanwell receives any CSO funding to cover the power offtake agreements that were forced on you by the government—any of those that are outside commercial rates?

CHAIR: I am going to let that one through, member for Burleigh, but you are touching on standing orders. I invite the officer to speak on that.

Mr Van Breda: The bidding direction was under the Electricity Act 1994. In accordance with that direction, Stanwell has undertaken its bidding appropriately in terms of—

Mr HART: Sorry. That is not the question.

Mr Van Breda: Stanwell has not received a CSO. The bidding direction was under the Electricity Act 1994, not under the GOC Act.

Mr HART: Sorry, it is nothing to do with the bidding. I am talking about the power offtake agreements that the government handed to you after they made those arrangements with renewable energy companies. You are taking power offtake agreements. Can you tell the committee if any CSO payments have been given to you because some of those deals are not done on a commercial rate?

Mr Van Breda: I can confirm that no CSOs were received by Stanwell Corporation.

Mr HART: I have a question for the CEO of CleanCo. Mr George, I want to ask about the source of power that CleanCo will be using. You have Swanbank E as a power station in your portfolio now, or you will have, and you will have Wivenhoe's pumped storage. We heard last year at estimates and through the year that approximately 60 per cent more power is required to pump water up the hill before you can release it down in a pumped hydro scheme. Can you tell us where the power to pump that water up the hill will be coming from? Will it be coming from Swanbank E or are you anticipating buying it from outside the company?

Mr George: Thank you for the question. The electricity market operates in Australia in what is called a gross market pool where electricity is traded, the physical commodity is traded and also financial contracts are written around electricity trading, the physical electricity trading. We have an ambition to build up a portfolio of clean energy assets, starting with our foundation portfolio which will be transferred to us on 31 October. That foundation portfolio includes Swanbank E gas-fired power station, Wivenhoe pumped storage hydro facility and the three Far North Queensland hydro stations—Barron Gorge, Kareeya and Koombaloo.

Our ambition is to use that initial foundation portfolio to facilitate further development of new renewable energy projects in the regions in Queensland, and our mandate is to facilitate an extra 1,000 megawatts of new renewables by 2025. We will do that by procuring that new renewable source of supply through investment. We have an allocation of \$150 million in FY20 and \$100 million in FY21 to invest in new renewable projects and we will also procure what we call offtake contracts from new renewable energy projects in order to facilitate that investment. In that way we will build up a portfolio of supply. That portfolio of supply is what will be used for our operations which will include, as your question refers to, energy to pump water up the hill at Wivenhoe.

Dr LYNHAM: Mr Chair, I would like to point out a couple of facts here. The questions asked thus far would not be able to be asked if there ever was a chance of a future LNP government with their divestment legislation in train under the federal government. It is just a privatisation agenda. I want to point out to the committee that none of these questions could possibly be asked in a privatised electricity environment. We have publicly owned assets which enable us to drive down costs for Queensland families. We have experts in the field, experts in our GOCs, that allow us to do this. There are significant cost savings around the board—especially Energy Queensland.

Also, in terms of Wivenhoe pump storage—I noticed the tone of the question—there is no vision for a renewable future from those in the LNP. We had power prices hitting five-minute spot prices of zero in the market just recently—zero for power. That is the time that sources such as pump storage such as Wivenhoe will be taking the power and pumping the water up the hill, so to speak, and at night-time that water will come down the hill as hydro-electricity, so water will be pumped up the hill potentially at zero cost and then coming down. That will benefit every Queensland family. Do you know where that power comes from, Mr Chair? That comes from the solar rooftops in Queensland. It will come from the 2,200 megawatts of solar.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister, for furnishing us with that additional information. Member for Burleigh, do you have any further questions?

Mr HART: Yes. Mr George, your company will start trading on 31 October, will it?

Mr George: Yes, that is correct.

Mr HART: On 31 August you will have Swanbank E and the Wivenhoe pump storage system. The Swanbank E is a gas peaking plant, which would be the most expensive form of electricity you could get in Queensland at the moment. When you multiply that by 1.6 times to sell pumped hydropower from it, how is CleanCo going to economically be able to sell electricity or, as the minister said, are you going to be buying electricity in the market on 31 October?

CHAIR: I am going to allow that question, but I remind the member for Burleigh once again about the long preambles.

Mr George: Thank you for the question. The way the electricity market works is that there is the physical trading of electricity and then financial contracts around that trading. It is not possible to identify where any one electron goes from the point of view of both generation and supply. The arrangements that we have in place and are building are to build a portfolio of supply-side options for the delivery of electricity. That would include a mix of financial contracts such as offtake contracts from new renewable energy projects that we would facilitate and that portfolio of supply is what we would use to pump electricity up the hill at Wivenhoe.

Dr LYNHAM: I draw the chair's attention to standing order 115. The preambles are getting very, very long. I also wish to correct a statement made by the member for Burleigh that Swanbank E is not a gas peaker plant; it is a combined cycle plant. Swanbank E is vital for reliability in this state; it is a plant that is used.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I have mentioned—I think twice now—the lengthy preambles. I am sure the members to my left are taking that on board. I ask you to make sure that you get straight to the question. We do not need a lengthy preamble or an argument in there as well.

Mr HART: Thank you for your direction, Mr Chair. Of course, energy is a very difficult subject, very complicated. Minister, with regard to transitional electricity tariffs for our farmers, the government announced recently that it would delay those tariffs becoming obsolete until after the 2020 election. There are 14,800 farmers who are involved here. Does that mean that you do not have a plan at all to assist these farmers with tariffs that make sense to them?

Mr MADDEN: Point of order. Mr Chair, I am concerned that this question breaches standing order 115(b)(iv) in that it has an imputation that farmers are not being properly assisted by the government. I would ask my friend to ask the question as is without the imputation.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Ipswich West. I do believe there was a slight imputation there. I ask the member to rephrase the question. I thought the imputation was the line he threw in about the election. Can you get straight to the question? I ask you to rephrase that.

Mr HART: Minister, the government recently announced that obsolete tariffs would cease 12 months after the date you originally announced they would cease. That has an effect on farmers. Does the government have any plans to offer tariffs that make sense to farmers to use to pump water?

Dr LYNHAM: The government, as rightly said, has decided to extend the phase-out date for legacy retail tariffs by 12 months, to 30 June 2021. We have made this decision to ensure the phase-out process is fair for our regional farmers and businesses. The extension will give regional businesses time to understand future tariff options presently being developed by Energy Queensland and provide a better opportunity for these businesses to make an informed assessment of their electricity needs. However, the Queensland government is firmly committed to phasing out legacy electricity tariffs to ensure that all customers pay a fair price for electricity, as was the case with the LNP government as well. Throughout the tenure of the Newman government you were also fully committed to this goal.

Energy Queensland will consult with customers throughout 2019 on its future tariff structures. I encourage regional businesses to continue to engage with Energy Queensland during this period. The impacts for legacy tariff customers switching to standard business tariffs vary widely and are not always negative depending on how much and when they use electricity. I ask that regional customers contact Energy Queensland to understand whether there is benefit in switching to a standard business tariff now. Some farmers and some businesses on these obsolete tariffs would have cheaper tariffs now if they switched to a standard business tariff. I would ask them to contact Energy Queensland to get advice regarding this.

To further help businesses with the transition, the Queensland government has invested \$30 million across a range of programs and initiatives to ensure businesses are better equipped to understand their electricity use and minimise electricity costs. This includes the Large Customer Adjustment Trial, the Large Customer Adjustment Program and the Energy Savers Plus Program extensions for farmers and irrigators. The initiatives provide participating businesses with free energy audits and financial assistance to improve energy efficiency.

The energy audits provide participants a range of options to improve energy efficiency. It is at the discretion of the participant to decide in which option to invest. The Queensland government also supports all Ergon Energy customers through the uniform tariff policy, which ensures that regional customers pay similar amounts for electricity as those in South-East Queensland. Most of the old, obsolete tariffs are set at levels not based on the cost of the supply of electricity. The recently released determination flags that for a second year in a row there will be no change to their price. In fact, over

the tenure of the Palaszczuk government these obsolete tariffs have increased by only 3.5 per cent. I note that members of the opposition like to mention that farmers' tariffs have increased by 100 per cent over so many years. They have to include their years, under the Newman government, to get to that figure, because under Palaszczuk government tenure the obsolete tariffs have increased by only 3.5 per cent.

I also note the rollout of Ergon Energy's tariff 33 trial, which is being used by farmers needing only a controlled load tariff with limited hours of supply. Dale Holliss of Bundaberg Regional Irrigators flagged the benefits that trial tariffs such as tariff 33 had for irrigators. We are also delivering the energy savers plus and providing funding for Energy Queensland to provide smart meters to large customers in advance of the phase-out of these obsolete tariffs.

In terms of extending it for a year, we also have to wait for the Australian Energy Regulator's determination, which is due in April. The Queensland Competition Authority will respond to the determination in April. There are a number of reasons we extended that. First, we extended it so that farmers and irrigators would have more time to transition from the obsolete tariff. Secondly, the Australian Energy Regulator determination is in April and then the Queensland Competition Authority will respond to that.

CHAIR: Thanks. We have been going on for a while now. I will throw to questions from members to my right.

Mr MADDEN: With reference to page 10 of the Service Delivery Statements for the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, can the minister detail any recent developments in Queensland energy policies or initiatives?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. I know that the member is a strong supporter of a vibrant renewables economy here in Queensland. As the member would be aware, only the Palaszczuk government is delivering the renewable future that Queenslanders need. That is why I was so pleased to be able to announce the short list for the Palaszczuk government's Renewables 400 program. The 10 short listed projects will compete for contracts that will kickstart new regional investments through new clean energy generator CleanCo, owned by the people of Queensland. These projects include multiple energy sources including wind power, large-scale solar and battery storage—projects right across the state of Queensland, from Cook shire in North Queensland to the Western Downs in the south.

The Palaszczuk government has also made the decision to have CleanCo work with the 10 short listed renewable energy proponents through the request for proposal stage. CleanCo is a natural and obvious fit to be the government owned corporation partner for the final stage of this process and will work to ensure that these are good jobs for the people of regional Queensland, in line with our procurement policy.

The interest in Renewables 400 demonstrates that the renewable sector in Queensland is thriving after the dark years between 2012 and 2015. Some 115 proposals were received, totalling 9,000 megawatts of renewable energy and almost 6,000 megawatts of energy storage. I remind the committee that 400 megawatts of energy is equivalent to a medium sized coal-fired power station. All proposals were subject to a rigorous evaluation process. The short listed projects have been invited to submit binding bids to provide the next wave of large-scale renewable energy.

As we move on to the next stage, it is important that investment continues to retain the benefits gained from the development of supply chains in the renewables sector and the ongoing jobs and economic development we have seen, particularly in regional Queensland. We are acutely aware of the need to ensure that the expansive renewable generation capacity is managed in a way that delivers the best outcomes for Queensland consumers in terms of reliable and affordable energy supply.

Shortly, CleanCo will commence the formal process with short listed proponents, and it is expected that successful projects will be announced in the first half of 2020. While there will be projects that miss out, I highlight that there will be further opportunities to invest in Queensland, be it in partnership with CleanCo as part of its mandate to deliver a further 1,000 megawatts of capacity by 2025 or as part of our ongoing process and progress to 50 per cent renewable energy. This is an exciting milestone, and I look forward to providing further updates on Queensland's renewable energy transition.

Ms PUGH: In reference to page 10 of the SDS, can the minister please outline what benefits CleanCo will deliver to the Queensland wholesale market in 2019?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. As the member would fully appreciate, the establishment of Queensland's new generation company, CleanCo Queensland, is a game changer for electricity generation and shows that the Queensland government is serious about real energy market reform that can only be delivered by assets that stay in Queensland families' ownership.

CleanCo will deliver on the government's objectives for a clean energy future, affordable energy prices, growing investment and jobs. That is why it was so exciting to be able to announce that as of 31 October this year CleanCo will be trading in the Queensland market. CleanCo was established on 17 December 2018, and a board and interim CEO have been appointed. Much work has been undertaken behind the scenes to ensure that CleanCo will be ready to trade in October. I must take the opportunity to thank Jacqui Walters, Miles George and the entire team for the long hours and support they have invested into delivering this game changer.

Queensland's third publicly owned generator will improve competition in the wholesale electricity market and put downward pressure on electricity prices. Preliminary analysis indicates that CleanCo should reduce wholesale electricity prices on average by about \$7 per megawatt hour, which is expected to translate to an estimated \$70 per annum saving for the average Queensland household. This is on top of our Powering Queensland Plan actions, which have already been spectacularly successful in continuing to suppress wholesale prices, with Queensland wholesale prices on average the lowest in the National Electricity Market for the past two years.

CleanCo forms a key part of our goal of 50 per cent renewable generation by 2030 and will further support growth in our renewable energy industry, delivering 1,000 megawatts of new renewable energy generation by 2025 in addition to existing low- and zero-emission government owned generation plants. Analysis of the role of CleanCo in the electricity market indicates that Queensland's existing coal-fired power generation fleet will continue to operate for a number of years, in accordance with its forecast economic life. It is only because we continue to own electricity generators that we are able to take this action and deliver on our energy commitments to benefit all Queenslanders.

By contrast, the LNP is still talking about generators as per the ACCC report when we have already delivered on these three generators. We would not be in a position where we could split our generators into three if the LNP had its way and sold off these assets. My biggest concern is that the state LNP has refused to flag exactly what its policy is so the people of Queensland cannot examine it on its policy. They say that they support three generators, but on the ground people are hearing that they want to wind up CleanCo immediately. What is it? Do they want three generators, or will they shut down Queensland's publicly owned renewable generator? The Palaszczuk government is committed to three strong, publicly owned generators, just like the ACCC report recommended. The addition of CleanCo into the market in time for the summer period of 2019-20 will be a great outcome for all Queenslanders.

Mr MADDEN: My question is again of the minister. In reference to page 10 of the Service Delivery Statements, Minister, you just outlined the benefits of CleanCo to Queenslanders. Can you outline any risks in the delivery of CleanCo to the people of Queensland?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. As previously discussed, CleanCo will absolutely be a game changer for the people of Queensland. CleanCo is estimated to provide a \$70 per year saving to the average Queensland household energy bill. As the member would appreciate, the Palaszczuk government takes its role in lowering energy prices for Queenslanders extremely seriously. Queensland needs certainty and the Palaszczuk government delivers the certainty and stability the energy sector needs.

When I meet with stakeholders they consistently raise with me that the biggest threat to investment in Queensland and Australia is the uncertainty of policy coming from Canberra. It is a federal government with a proud history of energy policy failure. Despite a united call from business, investors and experts—in fact, their own experts—the federal government still refuses to explore a carbon emissions framework. Their clean energy target was on and then it was off due to pressure from the LNP backbench federally. Then we had the National Energy Guarantee which was through but then it was not until it ultimately cost a prime minister his job. The default market offer was jammed through despite opposition from Liberal states like New South Wales and South Australia and also from Queensland due to concerns that in the medium to long term it would actually impede competition and minimise discounting as per the Australian Energy Market Commission's advice.

The impending threat of divestment legislation is also another threat which is causing significant uncertainty in the market and a measure that was never an ACCC recommendation, despite the federal energy minister's claims. Indeed, Rod Sims himself stated that it was an extreme measure and not

something that he was consulted on. We also had the unedifying spectacle of calls for nuclear power in Queensland from Liberal National Party members and proposals to underwrite new coal-fired power stations in Queensland. Unfortunately, the very process they set up to support a coal-fired power station could not find one to support. I cannot strongly emphasise this point enough: every time another ill considered policy proposal is put forward by a federal government, it risks damaging confidence in the market and places further pressures on the market. CleanCo does not need a federal government more intent on creating turbulence than the leadership this sector needs currently. That is without even getting to the threats CleanCo faces here in Queensland with a party that last year performed a renewables mandate backflip in less than 0.6 of a millisecond and refuses to rule out winding up or gutting CleanCo. There is only one party delivering a pragmatic, sensible, renewable climate policy here in Queensland, and that is the Palaszczuk government.

CHAIR: Thank you. We will have just one more question from the members to my right—just a quick one—before we go back to the opposition and then to a couple of quick questions from our crossbenchers.

Mr MADDEN: My question is again of the minister. In reference to page 10 of the Service Delivery Statements, can the minister please outline how the Queensland government is tracking to meet its 3,000 megawatt solar PV target?

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister, but just a brief response will be needed.

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. The member full well understands how quickly Queenslanders are embracing renewables in the state. Indeed, in your electorate 12,200 households have rooftop solar installed. Queensland locals are taking control of their power bills and are installing a new rooftop solar PV system every 12 minutes, and Bundaberg is the capital of the nation in terms of solar PV. I am pleased to report that the Queensland government's 3,000 megawatts of solar voltaics by 2020 target was met in 2018, two years early. Once again, it is another tick for the Palaszczuk government and its energy election commitment.

The surge of solar activity is continuing in 2019. As of the end of May 2019, there were 3,844 megawatts of total solar connected in Queensland. This fantastic outcome underpins the government's renewable energy credentials in making Queensland a world leader in solar power. In 2018, over 44,000 new solar systems were installed in Queensland. Queenslanders recognise the benefits of renewable energy and Queensland boasts six of the top 10 solar postcodes in Australia. Since the target was set in 2015, we have reformed voltage standards and delivered a raft of initiatives designed to bring the benefits of solar to all Queenslanders.

In remote Queensland an award-winning 200 kilowatt rooftop solar farm is delivering benefits to the Lockhart River Aboriginal shire community. We are now leveraging the success of the Lockhart River trial to deliver renewable energy solutions to four more remote communities—Doomadgee, Mapoon, Pormpuraaw and Bamaga. The government is also working to usher in the next wave of renewables technology, with over 3,000 Queenslanders taking advantage of our interest-free loans for our solar and storage program. Finally, our contribution through the Solar 150 initiative supported four solar farms in Queensland. This helped kickstart a renewable energy revolution. There are 26 large-scale solar projects in Queensland and another six to come. I am proud of the work done to date which has delivered on our target of 3,000 megawatts of solar by 2020 and now we are on to 50 per cent renewables by 2030.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go to the members to my left—opposition members—for about eight minutes worth.

Mr HART: Minister, can you tell the committee if you are aware of the conflict of interest that was contained in the question I asked the CEO of Energy Queensland earlier? It is a conflict of interest in the board members.

Dr LYNHAM: I am not aware of the conflict of interest, Chair, but I will take that on notice.

CHAIR: I point out that we are going to ask the acting CEO to come back at the end to see if we can get that information.

Dr LYNHAM: And I should have said the alleged conflict of interest.

CHAIR: Yes, indeed.

Mr HART: Minister, can you advise the committee if you were consulted by the industrial relations minister before the latest solar farm regulations were put in place, those laws that have now been ruled invalid by the courts?

CHAIR: I am almost—no, I am going to let that one through. Minister.

Dr LYNHAM: Chair, cabinet considerations are not able to be discussed at this forum.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Dr LYNHAM: I can edify the member in some way that may assist, with the discretion of the chair.

CHAIR: Certainly.

Dr LYNHAM: Queensland is leading the way in renewable energy investment and renewable projects that have recently become operational have delivered over 3,600 jobs, primarily in regional Queensland. In addition, renewable energy projects that are currently under construction are delivering about a thousand jobs in regional Queensland and a range of skills is required to deliver large-scale renewable energy projects. The primary opportunities for local companies and workers relate to the installation of panels, including electrical aspects, and civil construction such as site preparation, concreting and fencing. However, it is not just about construction jobs. The pipeline of projects is injecting cash flow in the local economy through rental of accommodations, hospitality, transport and local supply of goods and services. This supports further employment in the surrounding areas.

As the industry grows, it is important that it grows in a sustainable manner, including good health and safety outcomes for those building the projects. While the government sought to introduce a new electrical safety regulation that applied to solar farms, I am aware of the recent court proceedings which have ruled the new regulation invalid. As the member rightly knows, any questions regarding this and the next steps should be directed towards the appropriate minister, and that is Minister Grace.

Mr HART: Director-General, can you tell us how many meetings you have had with the ETU in the past year?

CHAIR: Before we go on to that, can I ask the member for Burleigh to make sure that we are relating the questions to the examination of future expenditure?

Mr Purtil: Thank you for the question. The answer is zero.

CHAIR: Do you have any further questions?

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take up the time talking about the lowest electricity prices on the eastern seaboard and moving to a renewable future.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr HART: Minister, in your answer to question on notice No. 8 you stated—

We have already taken action to put pressure on wholesale electricity prices. We directed Stanwell to modify its bidding strategies to more closely reflect its underlying costs.

Is this effectively admitting that your government has been using electricity as a hidden tax?

CHAIR: Member for Burleigh, you know what I am going to say. Can you rephrase that in a way that does not offend the standing orders? You had a hypothetical imputation in that. Did you want to have another go?

Mr HART: If the minister is giving a direction to Stanwell to change its bidding strategies to more closely reflect that underlying cost, in converse, does that not mean that, before that direction was given, Stanwell was selling electricity at an increased rate? It was making the government a lot of money.

CHAIR: Okay. Who would like—

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take that, Chair. There are incorrect views being pushed by those opposite regarding the nature of generator profits. There is a range of factors not related to the wholesale market that impact on revenue. Let us not forget the issues in the southern states, with the unplanned withdrawal of major generating assets pushing up spot prices. I make no apologies at all for taking revenue received from our ownership of these assets and reinvesting it in programs to stabilise energy prices and assist with affordability.

Let us pause on that for a moment. We are able to reinvest these assets because they are still owned by the people of Queensland. We do not have to plead with boards and CEOs located interstate or overseas for profits to be returned or reinvested into Queensland. These profits, these dividends, are not going to the Cayman Islands, China or Europe; they are going back to Queensland families. We will not allow the LNP to sell these key assets. These assets are owned by Queensland families.

Any fog of divestment legislation purported by the federal government that the state LNP is going to act under to sell our assets—we will do all we possibly can to make sure that these assets are not sold. We are ensuring that the dividends pay for essential services and initiatives, including \$2 billion

through the Affordable Energy Plan and the Powering Queensland Plan. Because we own our assets, we are delivering price decreases for Queenslanders. The most recent regional price determination was a \$62 saving for households and a \$144 saving for small businesses in regional Queensland. This builds on the price decreases seen over the last two years.

Every nuance in every question asked by the member opposite points towards their ultimate goal to privatise our electricity assets—our assets that are working for the benefit of every family in Queensland in having the lowest wholesale price on the eastern seaboard. The Palaszczuk government's energy policies are working for every Queensland family—unlike those opposite, with record power prices, 43 per cent increases during their term. If they ever got back in again we would see price increases and we would see record payments from Queensland families, and those payments would be going to China, Europe, the USA or the Cayman Islands.

CHAIR: Thank you. I am going to ask for a couple of questions from the crossbenchers. I call the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Minister, there has been expert criticism that Labor's 50 per cent renewable energy target is simply a target without a plan, and on the best available climate science we need to be more ambitious than that in any case. Without a federal Labor government for at least the next three years to legislate supportive frameworks and mechanisms, are you considering any backstop or legal mechanism to mandate this target?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. I thank him for his perceptiveness in regard to the difficulty with state governments having to set the policy agenda for the nation regarding meeting renewable energy mandates. It is extremely difficult having a federal government that does not share the states' vision, especially Labor states' vision. We heard from New South Wales as well. Before the New South Wales election, there was almost a revolt in New South Wales against federal government climate policy.

There is no policy on climate change within the federal government. There is no reasonable policy with a federal LNP government. It is up to state governments, such as the Palaszczuk Labor government, to make sure that we have that mandate of a 50 per cent renewable energy target. Next year we will hit 20 per cent, and our trajectory is on target to meet that mandate of 50 per cent—our renewable mandate.

On capacity, we are going to easily hit a 50 per cent renewable mandate. On output, we will get to 50 per cent renewables by 2030. I have no qualms in stating that we will get there by 2030. We need to have a target of 50 per cent renewable energy by that date, but we have to work with other states to achieve that. It is difficult without a federal Labor government.

Let me remind those opposite that all that federal Labor was doing on emissions policy was to duplicate that policy that was agreed to by a federal Liberal government and the states, and that was the National Energy Guarantee. We had reliability in, but we did not have emissions in at all. We were going to agree to that and we did agree to that, only to see it trashed by the backbenchers in the federal government.

It is difficult for all of the states. I have talked to my Victorian colleagues. It is like trying to hit a moving target with federal government policy. It just changes and changes. You cannot have 56 recommendations of an ACCC report, take two recommendations from those 56 and call it a national energy policy. It simply does not work if you take a couple of populist views out of there and start trying to plug in a national energy policy.

Let us look at a couple of those. One is underwriting coal-fired power stations. We hear from those opposite and from commentators that renewable energy is somehow being heavily subsidised, and we had a few hints about that from the member opposite in one of his earlier questions. Can you imagine the subsidies that would be required for a new coal-fired power station? A new coal-fired power station will deliver electricity at \$140 per megawatt. I can get a wind farm down to \$44. I can get solar at \$50.

Just yesterday we heard Angus Taylor talking about nuclear power. That is \$200 a megawatt hour—four or five times the cost of wind farm energy. Imagine the subsidies that would have to be plugged in from a federal government to support coal-fired or nuclear power in this state, where I can get wind power at \$55 a megawatt!

Under the Palaszczuk government, we have reliability, scrutiny of our power supply, the cheapest power in the wholesale market on the eastern seaboard and a 50 per cent trajectory. We have reliability. We are making sure that we keep downward pressure on power prices for all Queensland families. You cannot do that with a coal-fired power station or a nuclear power station. They will require immense subsidies.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, considering Victorians and the people in South Australia enjoy 150- and 160-megawatt demand charges respectively, why is Queensland being so disadvantaged at 100 megawatts?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. Just for some clarification, you are talking about the 100-megawatt limit demand charge?

Mr ANDREW: Yes. We also suffer restrictions from other suppliers as well. Why are we being so restricted and disadvantaged?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. The 100 megawatts is actually set in the National Electricity Rules that we follow. It is set by the COAG Energy Council.

Mr ANDREW: National Energy Retail Law (Queensland) 2014 section 19C(8) sets the 100-megawatt-hour limit.

Dr LYNHAM: It just replicates exactly what happens in national energy law. It is national policy that is followed by the Queensland government.

CHAIR: The committee will now conclude its questioning on the portfolio area of energy at this time and we will move on to the examination of the portfolio areas of land and water and titles and valuations.

CHAIR: As we move into this area, Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement of five minutes?

Dr LYNHAM: The Palaszczuk government takes its responsibility for sustainable management of our state's natural resources seriously. These resources range from vegetation management to water infrastructure, gas and coal to state land. We make these management decisions based on science and consultation with the community. The introduction of our responsible vegetation management laws restored the balance between environmental outcomes and food and fibre production. On release of the Inspector-General Emergency Management review, we once again promoted the facts as others attempted to create confusion about the ability of landholders to build firebreaks or conduct back-burning.

As was clearly stated in the IGEM review, there have been no changes to Queensland's vegetation management laws to prevent the construction of firebreaks or conduct back-burning. I wish to repeat that for emphasis—there have been no changes to Queensland's vegetation management laws to prevent the construction of firebreaks or conduct back-burning. Our vegetation management reforms have increased protection for high-value regrowth and remnant vegetation and boosted protection for important habitats, including waterways leading to the Great Barrier Reef. These reforms include the establishment of the extremely successful Vegetation Management Hub in Charleville, which is available to answer any questions landholders may have about managing vegetation on their land or harvesting fodder to feed their stock.

The Palaszczuk government continues to lead the nation when it comes to the resolution of native title claims, with 148 claims resolved to date. The Palaszczuk government takes a responsible, consistent approach to water infrastructure. Projects must demonstrate that they stack up before we commit Queensland taxpayers' money to the project. Such was the case with the \$215 million Haughton pipeline, which will provide water security for the people of the Townsville region and is being entirely funded by the Palaszczuk government. There are also other water infrastructure projects, such as Emu Swamp Dam and Burdekin Falls Dam to name just two, on which detailed business cases are being carefully scrutinised to decide whether or not they provide value for money for Queenslanders.

The Palaszczuk government is also working hard to enhance metering, measurement and compliance in rural water management across the state. Following the *Four Corners* coverage in 2016, a three-person independent panel was appointed to review metering, measurement and compliance throughout the state. The audit identified that the Queensland government had strong water planning processes and laws but needed to enhance its water information systems, metering policies and compliance activities. Following the completion of our independent audit the Queensland government endorsed a reform program, the Rural Water Management Program, to progress this very important work. This program is designed to ensure greater accountability and transparency in how water is managed by both government and water users, with an initial focus on improving management in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin.

Dam improvement programs undertaken by Seqwater and SunWater are vital aspects of this government's focus on ensuring the sustainability and longevity of our water resource assets. Seqwater budgeted a record \$153 million in capital expenditure for 2019-20, focusing on the continuation of a

safe, secure and reliable water supply for South-East Queensland, as well as providing essential flood mitigation services and managing catchment health. SunWater has allocated \$43.5 million to enhance dams to meet future extreme weather conditions and to continue to provide water security for regional Queensland. My department's clear goal is secure, reliable and sustainable management of our natural resources. Through consultation, due diligence and sheer hard work and determination, we have shown this to be an attainable goal.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now go to some questions. Member for Burdekin, I understand you are going to lead off.

Mr LAST: My first question is to the minister. Minister, in reference to page 5 of the SDS relating to the percentage of the state's water service providers compliant with drinking water regulatory requirements, in this measure it notes that in 2018-19, 94 per cent of the providers were compliant. Every Queenslanders is entitled to compliant drinking water. Will you name those providers that are noncompliant water providers and explain what the government is doing to bring this figure to 100 per cent?

Dr LYNHAM: There are some that are temporarily non-compliant. There is an overlap between local government and my department regarding this issue. I will take that on notice and get back to the member.

Mr LAST: Minister, I refer you to page 5 of the SDS which states your target for compliant drinking water service providers for 2019-20 is 90 per cent. Can you explain why it is acceptable that the quality of Queensland's drinking water should actually reduce compared to last year?

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take that on notice. The target we always aim for is 100 per cent, but because of the overlap with local government responsibilities, with some communities falling out of compliance, it is quite detailed. I am quite happy to give the member a briefing regarding this issue.

CHAIR: If you have any more information we will come back to it.

Mr LAST: Could I ask the CEO of SunWater to come forward, please. With reference to page 4 of the SDS relating to the 2019-20 service area highlights, which mentions the implementation of rural irrigation prices from the QCA review, would you explain why SunWater has updated and resubmitted its report to the QCA four times and whether 112 per cent increases in non-routine expenditure across all the schemes from the QCA target from 2013 to 2018 totalling \$69,160,000 compared to the actual \$146,566,000 are a sign of good financial management from your organisation?

CHAIR: Before we go on, that is a long question with a lot of detail. You have referenced the SDS, but obviously it goes a bit further. I will allow that through and we will see where we go with it.

Ms Hollows: The question is quite detailed. I will attempt to answer it as best I can. Late last year we made a submission to the Queensland Competition Authority as the regulator for irrigation bulk water prices. We currently do not recover all of our costs in relation to irrigation. The submission that SunWater made was in relation to our costs, not recommending what prices will be charged. That is a QCA decision as to what is sufficient and prudent and then, ultimately, it is a government decision.

We made various submissions in the spirit of being transparent. We had various conversations, including updating our network service plans and having consultation with irrigation groups across the state as well as the QFF and the QCA. The part of us making that submission in 2018 was initially on our 2019 budget estimates. Given the transpiration of time and given that we had finalised our FY20 budget, we felt that we should update our submission and included updated costs in relation to our 2020 financial year. We made that submission in June 2019. The updated costs across the whole board did not increase if you excluded power costs and insurance costs. Both of those costs we cannot fully control. Our total costs between those two submissions did not vary in total. It was only the share of the costs between those schemes.

We looked at how we could more truly reflect the cost allocation across the various schemes as part of our continuous improvement process. That meant that some schemes had increased costs and some schemes had reduced costs. The main reallocation of those costs was in relation to local overheads. We had two cost centres for local overheads and we have made eight cost centres to be more transparent, given the feedback from irrigation committees across the state in that they thought divvying it up across two was not appropriate and there was no transparency in relation to that. That was part of that reason. That means that for some there are benefits and for others—so some of the schemes that you have stated with increases—there are increases. Further, some of those cost increases, when comparing, are from our initial costs in 2012 and we have only had indexation in pricing from those costs—no doubt when you have had seven years of increased costs through inflation, increased insurance particularly, and also flood repairs.

Part of your question was in relation to the total irrigation non-direct costs. In actual fact, they went down in our updated submission in total. Our total overhead costs have actually gone down from 2012 to 2019.

Dr LYNHAM: If I could add—

Mr MICKELBERG: Point of order. Under standing orders 181(b), 182(2) and 182(3), as we discussed earlier, the minister can only answer questions that are directed to him directly or provide additional information in writing.

CHAIR: I will make this easier for you. This is a question from me: Minister, do you want to give some further information?

Mr MICKELBERG: Point of order, Mr Chair. Let me finish my point of order.

CHAIR: I just finished with your point of order. Do you have another one?

Mr MICKELBERG: I have not finished.

CHAIR: I dealt with your point of order. Do you have another point of order?

Mr MICKELBERG: Your previous questions, in the last section of questions, added up to two minutes and 30 seconds and that did not come off government time. I ask that if you are going to police it in that manner—

CHAIR: Member for Buderim, there is no point of order. It did. I have been keeping a close eye on things up here.

Mr MICKELBERG: Fourteen and a half minutes.

CHAIR: I am keeping an eye on these things here. I caution the member for Buderim. We are under control here. Everything is fine. Minister, would you like to answer my question?

Dr LYNHAM: As SunWater has advised, its overhead costs as submitted to the Queensland Competition Authority have, in fact, fallen for 2019-20 compared to 2018-19 but it has simply updated the way these costs are allocated across schemes. The updated cost allocation has resulted in a price shift in overhead costs for some schemes. SunWater has made some updates to the costs proposed since making its original submission to the QCA in November 2018. SunWater is committed to being transparent with its customers. It has provided the QCA with updates and forecast costs to ensure the QCA has the best available information.

I am often in discussions with farmers, especially through their representative bodies such as the Queensland Farmers' Federation. They are often in my office. We are working through these processes together. We have been seeing in the media the talk from those opposite that is simple fearmongering regarding the costs of irrigation. I just want to point out that you are on notice. The processes are there. They have been outlined by SunWater. The QCA will make a relevant decision. There will be draft determinations out there. The fearmongering in the media is unconscionable.

Mr LAST: Minister, given that particular comment, I have been visiting irrigators throughout Queensland who are very concerned about the proposed water price increases to meet SunWater's cost-reflective pricing. Will you commit here today to not accept SunWater's inflated and biased cost-reflective pricing proposal?

Ms PUGH: Point of order. There are clear inferences in that question.

CHAIR: Yes. The member for Burdekin knows that. Can you rephrase the question without any imputations?

Mr LAST: Minister, will you commit here today to not accept SunWater's cost-reflective pricing proposal?

Dr LYNHAM: Chair, where is this in the budget papers?

CHAIR: Member for Buderim, is this referring to any further expenditure in this financial year?

Mr LAST: It is page 4 of the SDS

CHAIR: You are talking about page 4 of the SDS. Is there any particular section? What does it say?

Mr MICKELBERG: Page 4 of the SDS talks about the implementation of rural irrigation prices from the QCA review.

CHAIR: It is in terms of the review. Have we dealt with this already?

Dr LYNHAM: Chair, the member has said it himself regarding the QCA review. The QCA recommends prices. SunWater does not set the prices. There will be a draft QCA determination out and further discussion will be on the draft QCA determination. We have just seen horrific fearmongering by those members opposite for sheer political points with farming communities going through drought. Sixty-five per cent of Queensland is in drought at present. They do not need fearmongering from those opposite. We have talked at length with farmers' representative bodies, such as the Queensland Farmers' Federation, and we are working with them.

The QCA will make that determination. There will be a draft document for everyone to see, with transparency through and through. We do not need to go through this political pointscoring when farmers are suffering. Sixty-five per cent of Queensland is in drought, farmers are suffering and here we have some cheap political points being scored by those opposite. It is totally unnecessary. We do not need this. We should be working together, as we are with the farmers. The QCA will make a draft determination for everyone to see.

Mr BATT: My question is to the SunWater CEO, Ms Hollows, with reference to page 3 of the SDS relating to the service performance description, which specifically refers to the safety of referable dams. Between SunWater and Seqwater there are 49 referable dams and you are tasked to manage their safety. What are the costs associated with the increased safety standards imposed on your dams by the ANCOLD guidelines for acceptable flood capacity for water dams, July 2017, which cater for the one-in-15,000-year events? Which assets do not currently comply?

Ms Hollows: Dams are lifelong assets. As a dam owner we are required to follow the ANCOLD guidelines as well as the Queensland state regulation. It is quite a technical answer and I am not a technical person, so I cannot go into the level of detail. However, I can say that a number of our dams are above the limit of tolerability in relation to the ANCOLD guidelines. Our dams are safe and we do works to continue to upgrade and we do inspections. We undertake inspections annually and we then do five-year full-year studies. If there are works required, it is to maintain modern design standards, taking into account increased populations downstream and extreme weather events. The main reason for the dam improvement program is in relation to ensuring that, through extreme weather events, the dams can safely hold and be able to handle and spill that excess water.

Our dam improvement program is part of our asset management strategy. Irrespective of the specific ANCOLD guideline changes, there have not been a lot of changes over the past couple of years. It is matter of understanding the studies and doing the assessments, and looking at what works are required. Those works do require extensive studies, hydrological assessments and geotechnical assessments. That then means that we have to look at doing business cases to determine what those costs are. In terms of the costs on our dam safety program, we spent \$42 million in the 2019 financial year which was for the Fairbairn Dam which is currently under construction. We are waiting for government approval to recommence the detailed business case for the Burdekin Falls Dam and Paradise Dam.

Fairbairn, Paradise and Burdekin Falls are the three higher risk dams. Beardmore Dam had a dam safety issue which we are undertaking works for now. If you look at the top four dams in the highest risk that is why we are prioritising them. We do a portfolio risk assessment. Every year we review that. That actually looks at the whole portfolio of dams and then allocates at highest risk, on a risk based process, which dams should be progressed first.

Mr BATT: Paradise Dam, which is in my area of the Wide Bay, is currently going through a business case to do some of that including repair damage from the 2013 events. From presentations made to local growers some of these dam safety repair options involve significant costs to maintain the existing spillway. What is SunWater's position around the potential lowering of the Paradise Dam spillway by up to 17 metres?

Ms Hollows: SunWater, as a government owned corporation, has a commercial charter. Our job is to look at options—a number of options—and present those to government to make a decision in terms of what is the best outcome in the longer term. The detailed business case has commenced for Paradise Dam which includes two options. One is a full supply option. Another option, which provides a lower cost and a lower dam safety outcome—at a lower level, which is what you are talking about—is that lowering of the level of the spillway.

That is not our decision to make. That will be made through the Building Queensland led business case that is being undertaken. That will be presented to the state government and the state government will make the decision about which of those options would be the best option to proceed with.

Mr LAST: My question is to the director-general. I refer to page 3 of the SDS relating to the service performance description which specifically refers to administering water security, including infrastructure, planning and administering non-commercial dams and weirs. Director-General, as you would be aware, the Granite Belt is in the grip of the worst drought in living memory. Can you advise the committee when the approvals for the proposed Emu Swamp Dam located near Stanthorpe will be finalised?

Mr Purtill: There are currently no outstanding approvals awaiting a decision by the state government with respect to the Granite Belt Irrigation Project, the Emu Swamp Dam, that I am aware of. I will take advice if that is not the case. As far as I know, the Emu Swamp Dam process is still in its business case development. There are a number of questions that we as the state have put back to the proponents with their preliminary business case. That work is still underway and will continue. In terms of specifics, I will check with the deputy director-general of natural resources. In terms of specific approvals there are actually none outstanding that I am aware of.

Mr LAST: I would like to table a letter dated 19 July from Granite Belt Water Ltd regarding this business case and their response in which they clearly state that they have addressed all the outstanding issues. I am happy to give the director-general time to have a look at that.

CHAIR: Member for Burdekin, has this been received? It has 19 July on this particular letter. It may be that this has not been received yet. We will give that a quick look over.

Mr Purtill: I am happy to take that on notice to save you time.

Mr LAST: Thank you.

Mr Purtill: We certainly maintain a position that the proponents are yet to secure the water from each of the sources required for their business case.

CHAIR: We will deal with the issue of that being officially tabled during our break. The minister will take that on notice.

Mr LAST: Minister, the federal government has committed \$47 million for this project with private irrigators and growers committing a further \$23.4 million. Will the state government commit to funding the remaining \$13.6 million so that this much needed project can get under way?

CHAIR: I will let that one through. It does not deal yet with any cabinet submissions. I will let the minister answer that one.

Dr LYNHAM: As the member said, the Emu Swamp Dam proposal is for a 12,000 megalitre dam near Stanthorpe on the Granite Belt. It will support approximately 273 hectares of irrigated land. The final detailed business case was provided to the Commonwealth on 25 February 2019. This detailed business case was developed by the proponent, the Stanthorpe and Granite Belt Chamber of Commerce. The detailed business case includes a department assessment of outstanding matters.

This is one of the projects that I have been intently focused on for some time. I have been regularly briefed on the navigation and resolution of various issues by my department. I understand the department has been working closely with the proponent to ensure that there will be sufficient entitlements to meet the 3,900 megalitre target by a number of sources, including the strategic reserve, town water supply allocations and a small Indigenous purposes allocation. Obviously it is a complex proposal that needs to be assessed carefully. I well remember the town water supply allocation and the issues with Southern Downs Regional Council regarding that.

Whilst there are provisions proposed to enable an emergency water supply for Stanthorpe, the concept of using town water supply allocations has been a matter that has still exercised the mind of Southern Downs Regional Council. Another matter we are currently looking at closely is the use of a tier 2 contractor to construct a clay core rock face dam. This proposal has implications for both engineering suitability and costs.

The federal government is supportive of Emu Swamp Dam, having publicly offered \$42 million for construction and \$5 million for associated roadworks. I have spoken about this several times with the minister for agriculture, the Hon. David Littleproud, who is the local federal member and very enthusiastic about this dam, which may explain the generous terms being offered. Last week I met with the Deputy Prime Minister concerning Emu Swamp Dam. I understand the federal government has indicated that they are prepared to take on cost overruns but that is yet to be confirmed.

While there is a lot of support for Emu Swamp Dam, enthusiasm cannot be a substitute for considered assessment. Currently across Queensland, as you are aware, we have billions of dollars worth of dam proposals. We need to ensure that we make careful, considered solutions. I look forward to the opportunity to continue to inform the House as to the government's work with the Emu Swamp Dam proponents.

CHAIR: I will move to the member for Ipswich West.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you advise the committee of the efforts the Palaszczuk government has taken to enhance the security of Townsville's water supply?

Dr LYNHAM: I know the member has a keen interest in water security issues across Queensland, whether that is in his electorate or in Townsville or elsewhere. I am proud to say that the Palaszczuk government has committed \$225 million to address Townsville's long-term water security needs, supporting the recommendations of the Townsville Water Security Taskforce.

This funding is in two parts. The first is \$10 million provided to the Townsville council for a water smart package. This package includes a rebate program and a community education program to improve the Townsville community's water efficiency practices. Improving water efficiency can be worth millions of dollars in terms of saved water. Indeed, the \$10 million Water Smart Package was launched just last week. The Palaszczuk government is also contributing \$215 million towards a new 37-kilometre pipeline to connect the Haughton pump station to the Ross River Dam.

This expenditure is important because not only will it develop important long-term water infrastructure to enhance Townsville's water security but also we have brought the expenditure forward to act as an economic stimulus in the Townsville economy. I understand that council has made good progress with major suppliers appointed, design completed, and civil and pipe-laying activities also commencing onsite.

This project has been slightly delayed by the terrible February floods that swept across most of northern Queensland and Townsville, but Townsville City Council advised that the pipeline should be completed by March 2020. These funds are already flowing to the Townsville City Council. A total of \$160 million was transferred to council in the financial year 2018-19. A further \$55 million is expected to be transferred in the first half of the current financial year.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to the people of Townsville and all North Queensland. This is clear in our commitment to this project. It is also clear in the strong and untiring advocacy of the three Labor state members for the Townsville region.

Ms PUGH: In reference to page 2 of the SDS, is the minister able to advise the committee of the progress of the important Cape York water plan being developed through your department?

Dr LYNHAM: I am pleased to advise the committee that on 7 June 2019 the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy finalised the Cape York water plan. This outcome is an important achievement for the Cape York community and particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who live on the cape. For the first time, Cape York has a water management plan that is consistent with water plans across this state.

The creation of the Cape York water plan allows for management rules covering existing and future water use. It also allows for the allocation of water to be used to preserve and sustain the Cape York environment. As I have said, this is of particular significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it gives them the capacity to make important decisions about the use of water in the cape which will affect their economic, social and cultural needs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to about 485,000 megalitres of unallocated water across 13 catchments in the region. The water plan also ensures that 97.5 per cent of the median annual freshwater flows of rivers in the region will flow to either the Gulf of Carpentaria or the Great Barrier Reef. This will help maintain the health of these river systems and preserve the rich environmental values of Cape York.

Cape York is also home to a number of important industries that rely on water. These include agriculture including irrigated agriculture, tourism, mining, aquaculture and grazing. The water plan will give these industries more certainty about water availability by recognising their existing rights to water and allow some opportunities for future growth.

The Cape York water plan will be carefully monitored to ensure it achieves a balance between the needs of the community, environmental values and development needs. The Cape York water plan was developed by my department with widespread consultation across the community including 32 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, local water users, industry and regional bodies. All of these groups are to be congratulated on what is a very good outcome.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, there has been considerable media coverage as to the changes to the rules with regard to harvesting of mulga, *Acacia aneura*, which is a wonderful natural resource for the graziers of South-West Queensland. In reference to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements and the

department's key priority to deliver a program of work to implement the suite of vegetation management commitments, will the minister update the committee on the changes to the rules regarding mulga harvesting and, as well, any advice the minister has on how farmers are adapting to these new rules?

Dr LYNHAM: I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight on this issue. It is one that has caused a lot of concern amongst landholders in Western Queensland who have been misled by an opposition who failed the test of maintaining sustainable vegetation management laws when they were briefly in government. One of the most blatant examples of misleading claims from the opposition occurred on 29 August last year—and there have been many examples—when the member for Burdekin and shadow minister put a video on his social media account. In it he stated—

The issue becomes you're not allowed to clear for a five-metre radius. As you look across the mulga, you will see that it is now impossible to come in here. What this means is that this land will be locked up forever and the owners and graziers cannot do anything with it.

This five-metre rule, which he demonstrated to viewers with a plethora of pink tape placed five metres around a tree, was invented by the LNP and was a requirement on page 12 of the LNP 'Managing thickened vegetation in the Mulga Lands' self-assessable code. By contrast, there is no five-metre rule in our self-assessable code for harvesting. I hope the post is still there—29 August was the Facebook post.

The Palaszczuk government is aware of the need to balance environmental protections with food and fibre production. We have continued to provide flexibility for farmers who need to harvest fodder to feed their stock during times of drought. This is why our laws allow farmers to push mulga to feed their stock without seeking approvals. We have also met our election commitment to retain many other similar codes to allow farmers to manage their properties without seeking approvals.

These codes are working. A revised fodder harvesting code came into effect in March 2018 with modest changes to address the Queensland Herbarium and CSIRO feedback. Since then, to 30 June 2019 there have been 590 notifications made covering 257,000 hectares. Of these, there are 92 lots that have multiple notifications including one lot with 20 notifications. This shows that our landholders recognise that our mulga harvesting code is useable and sustainable.

I warned farmers, I think last year at estimates, to ignore the politicians from the LNP with their confused scaremongering regarding our vegetation codes. This is another example. I encourage any rural producer to not listen to LNP representatives. They are just trying to score political points and create confusion. If you have any concerns or questions about vegetation management, call the experts—135VEG. They are based in Charleville and they will assist.

CHAIR: I refer to page 4 of the SDS. Minister, can you please advise of any recent improvements in water security for the residents in the electorate of Bancroft?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. I know that he is a strong advocate for ensuring his constituents have safe, reliable drinking water supplies. The Palaszczuk government is ensuring water security across Queensland which is why approximately this time last year 100,000 Moreton Bay residents turned on their taps to a new, more secure drinking water supply throughout as part of a joint project between Seqwater and Unitywater. The former Petrie Water Treatment Plant was constructed over six decades ago and required a significant upgrade. Connection to the South-East Queensland Water Grid proved to be the most cost-effective solution and provided additional water security benefits.

The SEQ Water Grid is one of Australia's most secure drinking water supplies. The grid allows water to be moved around the region in both directions anywhere between the Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast. The project consists of four stages: first, a pipeline to connect the Boundary Road reservoir with the Northern Pipeline Interconnector; followed by a new pumping station and associated network configurations at the Petrie plant, as well as pipework reconfigurations and decommissioning of the Kallangur pumping station; then the installation of a new water quality management facility at Boundary Road reservoir; and, finally, the decommission of the old Petrie Water Treatment Plant.

People living in suburbs in your electorate of Bancroft and surrounds including Dakabin, North Lakes, Mango Hill, Kallangur, Murrumba Downs, Griffin, Petrie, Lawnton and Strathpine have now transitioned to the South-East Queensland Water Grid. The transition followed the commissioning of \$16.5 million worth of water infrastructure upgrades including the construction of a 2.4-kilometre pipeline to connect the area to the grid. The new connection meant that these communities can now be supplied from three separate water sources, significantly improving water supply security.

I note that the project won the engineering construction award at the Project Management Achievement Awards last year. This not only highlights the ongoing success of Seqwater's interaction with other water entities but also their commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of one of our most precious resources.

Chair, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many workers who contributed to this project, many of whom live in your electorate. This is not the only water security project that the Palaszczuk government is delivering across Queensland. The Palaszczuk government has contributed \$225 million to water security in Townsville and \$176 million to construct the Rookwood Weir, which will provide water security for Rockhampton, Gladstone and Yeppoon. Thanks to our buy Queensland policy, both of these projects will simultaneously boost economic development in these regions.

Ms PUGH: Minister, with reference to page 4 of the SDS can the minister please inform the committee of the progress of the Cairns showgrounds master plan?

Dr LYNHAM: I am pleased to inform the committee that this is yet another election commitment delivered by the Palaszczuk government. In 2017 my colleague, the member for Cairns, made a government election commitment that the state would contribute \$100,000 towards an investigation into the best and most appropriate way the Cairns showgrounds could be redeveloped. Following a formal procurement process my department engaged an independent planning consultant for the development of a new master plan and management plan for the site. The Cairns Regional Council, Cairns Show Association, Cairns District Rugby League and other users of the site have been engaged throughout the planning process through an established advisory group and a number of face-to-face sessions.

My department has worked closely with consultant and advisory group members to ensure that the current users of the site are accommodated in any future development of the site. Additional consultation with key stakeholders and formal and informal users on the final draft master plan and management plan occurred in April 2019, with feedback reflected in the final master plan and management plan. In June 2019 the consultant delivered the final master plan and management plan to my department, which displays a bright future for the Barlow Park precinct and the 47 individual community organisations that utilise the site.

On 1 July 2019 I wrote to the Cairns Regional Council, Cairns Show Association, Cairns District Rugby League and Cairns Athletics to thank them for their participation in the consultation process and providing them with copies of the final master plan and management plan. This master plan represents a strong long-term strategy for the growth and development of this site, including the proposed divestment of under-utilised areas and recycling the proceeds back into the rejuvenation of the site. The government is committed to working with the trustee of the site to maximise utilisation of the site. The next steps are for the trustee, the Cairns Regional Council and all users of the site to assess funding options to develop the site in line with the master plan.

These showgrounds have the potential to be a key asset for the city of Cairns and contribute to jobs and investment for the long term. This master plan will bolster the Cairns show for many years to come whilst creating a precinct that can be used for a multitude of other purposes.

Mr MADDEN: With reference to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statement, can the minister inform the committee how his department sustainably manages our natural resources and is this data available to the public?

CHAIR: Minister, if you could quickly answer that question before we return to the opposition.

Dr LYNHAM: The Palaszczuk government is committed to providing open and accessible data where that is possible. As part of this the government has created two tools: Queensland Globe and the Natural Resources Inventory. The facts about natural resources in Queensland are more accessible than ever before. Across government numerous agencies collect and manage extensive amounts of information. The Natural Resources Inventory alone draws on data from the state's land, water, vegetation and energy resources from over 200 data sources and nearly 10,000 charts and figures. The Queensland Globe is an online web browser application hosted by my department for anyone at any time on the device of their choice to collate and display spatial location based information. There are 800 layers of information throughout the Globe, including: boundaries of land parcels; road, rail and drainage networks; boundaries of administrative and legislative areas; soils and vegetation; and geological and environmental conservation activities. Users of the information include individuals, businesses, not for profits, academia and government at all levels.

Complementing Queensland Globe is the Natural Resources Inventory. It is the world's first fully digital natural resources inventory, and it was launched by my department in April this year. Users can use the Natural Resources Inventory to explore topical themes such as renewable energy, water availability, land use and the value of the resources sector to the state's economy. For investors, this is information on the availability of resources with links to further information plus economic and user data tailored to showcase the wealth of opportunities available in Queensland. The inventory allows the public access to information that was previously difficult to interpret or spread across multiple data sites.

The inventory's user-friendly website highlights the state's sustainable and responsible management of resources. Over 10,000 new users have already visited the website since it was first launched in April. I encourage all members to jump on and take a look.

CHAIR: We will go to the opposition for 10 minutes and then we will have five minutes for the crossbenchers. Who would like to start?

Mr LAST: Could I ask the CEO of SunWater to come forward again. Ms Hollows, with reference to page 4 of the SDS relating to the 2019-20 service area highlights, which specifically refers to the delivery of the Rookwood Weir project, can you explain why construction of the Rookwood Weir, which was scheduled to commence in mid-2019, has now been delayed and when we can expect to see ground broken at the site?

Ms Hollows: The detailed business case led by Building Queensland was completed in September 2017 for the Rookwood Weir project. As you are aware, both state and federal governments have committed to fund this project for \$352 million. SunWater was advised as the state entity responsible for the construction and operation of the weir in mid-2018. We immediately commenced preparatory works at that point in time. The Rookwood Weir project is being supported as it will provide improved water security and available water supply for irrigators. We received \$66 million in funding from the state, of which \$49 million was received by the end of June in accordance with milestones agreed under the development funding agreement with the state government.

We have spent \$37 million of this to the end of June 2019. This includes reimbursement to GAWB, the Gladstone Area Water Board, of \$12 million for their share of the EIS, the design and study costs, prior to June 2018, transitional arrangements to November 2018 and an additional \$16 million to ourselves for the work that had been undertaken to date. The remaining funding will allow the construction of early works, procurement activities, land acquisition and project management up to 30 June. The business case at the time was developed on a concept study, and we have continued to do design works over the last financial year. We have established a project team to allow us execution of these projects and we are looking at the six components: the weir, bridge upgrades, the low-level crossing upgrade and the upgraded intersection of the Capricorn Highway at Gogango. The development of project management, stakeholder management and water management plans have been undertaken, and we have completed 85 per cent of the design for the weir and 99 per cent of the design for the Foleyvale and Riverslea bridges. We have put in place strategic procurement plan development for the main weir package and early works packages. The Thirsty Creek roadworks, including final design and procurement planning, have been undertaken.

Over the next financial year, by December 2019 SunWater will have completed the final design of the weir and bridges, and we will have issued procurement expressions of interest for the main weir package. We will have commenced the Thirsty Creek roadwork upgrade construction, which will be undertaken by the Rockhampton Regional Council. We will also have issued procurement requests for the offer for the Capricorn Highway upgrade. By mid-2020 we would expect to have issued contract award for the construction of the weir. We continue to negotiate with landowners to look at the acquisition of their land and obtain secondary environmental approvals, which are still required for the project before it can commence.

Mr LAST: You talked about the issuing of the contract next year, so how long after that will it be before we expect to see work commence at that site?

Ms Hollows: We would expect that construction would commence after the contract has been awarded and through a mobilisation period, and then construction would be expected to be completed and commissioning by the end of 2024. We are currently forecasting a three-year construction period given the wet seasons and given secondary environmental approvals and understanding more detail of the design. The amount of in-river construction works are limited, so can you only undertake them at certain periods of time and particularly not in the wet season.

Dr LYNHAM: Mr Chair, can I add something?

CHAIR: Very briefly, Minister.

Dr LYNHAM: The Queensland government is the only government funding SunWater for Rookwood Weir at this stage. We are still waiting for the federal government. I just want to make that absolutely clear—that any early works will be provided by money paid by the Queensland government.

Mr LAST: My next question is to the director-general and refers to page 14 of the SDS relating to the departmental budget summary and expenses. In 2018-19, the Natural Resources Management Services expenses were budgeted to be \$392,556,000 but the estimated actuals for the same period

have blown out to \$511,445,000—a \$119 million increase. Given that your department has budgeted in 2019-20 for expenses of \$384,318,000—some \$8 million less than last year's budget—can you explain the expenses blowout and how exactly the department intends to stick to its budget this year?

CHAIR: That is a long question. I am not going to ask you to rephrase that for standing orders, but I am going to give a bit of latitude with the answer for that one.

Mr Purtill: I thank you for the question. I am going to ask the chief financial officer for the department to give you some feedback on your question.

Ms Platt: If I understand your question properly, you are trying to understand the difference in the three columns for the Natural Resources Management Services?

Mr LAST: The 2019-20 budget for expenses is some \$8 million less than last year's budget, which was grossly exceeded. Can you explain why last year's budget was exceeded and how you intend to stick to your budget this year, given that it is less than last year?

Ms Platt: The difference between the three columns is about timing of particular programs. They are often three or four years long and will have different levels of expenditure in each. I will explain both columns. The main variances from the 2018-19 published budget to the estimated actuals of \$118.9 million was as follows: the bringing forward of the Townsville water security payment of \$145 million; a deferral of the local management arrangements due to the last scheme being completed in 2019-20; and some timing around Water for the Future Healthy HeadWaters of \$9.4 million. Then the variance from the 2018-19 estimated actual figure to the 2019-20 published budget is as follows: Townsville water security of \$105 million—in 2018-19 we had \$160 million, and in the estimates for 2019-20 there is \$55 million; Water for the Future Healthy HeadWaters of \$11.8 million; the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund of \$6.2 million; and the local management arrangements of \$2.8 million.

Mr LAST: Thank you. Director-General, I refer to page 3 of the SDS relating to the service performance description. The Building Queensland preliminary business case for Nullinga Dam was finalised in 2017 and on its website it says that it has commenced discussions with SunWater and the department to develop the detailed business case. Can you explain your department's involvement with the business case study currently being completed by Building Queensland and when can we expect to see this study finalised?

CHAIR: Just to clarify, is this a Building Queensland question or is it a departmental question?

Mr LAST: It regards Nullinga Dam and page 3 of the SDS.

Mr Purtill: I am happy to assist where I can. Building Queensland has completed the Nullinga Dam business case. That actually finalises a commitment from the Queensland government to facilitate the investigations that were funded by the NWIDF process. The detailed business case is now being considered inside Queensland government. The detailed business case built on the earlier preliminary case and an accompanying expression of interest in additional water supplies that was supplied by MSF Sugar on the Tablelands.

The additional work by Building Queensland has updated the estimated costs of constructing the dam and associated distribution network as well as the potential economic benefits that might be realised if the project were to progress. A more detailed water demand study has been undertaken to better understand the volume of water that could be used from the dam, as well as the amount that end users would be able and willing to pay within the constraints of their business costs. Consideration and comparison of the various options, including Nullinga Dam, to meet the identified demands for water is necessary to identify the most appropriate way forward at this time. Once the Queensland government has had time to consider Building Queensland's detailed business case, the documents will then be sent to the Australian government for its consideration—not dissimilar to the process I referred to for Emu Swamp. The final business case then gets published on the department's website.

Simultaneously, the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme modernisation project that SunWater is currently undertaking is another project in the vicinity that would also increase water availability for irrigators in the area, so there is an opportunity to compare and contrast the business case and benefits of the two projects. Having been to the Nullinga Dam site, I believe there are a number of significant challenges for the project. Certainly, on the material that I have seen already, it is an extremely costly project per megalitre in order to proceed. The process of the detailed business case is to put forward the benefit-cost analysis, to look at not only the commerciality but also the economic

benefits that might be brought, and then to make assessments around whether the market has an appetite for the product itself and also the costs that it might be realised at. It is certainly a challenging project—many dam projects are, as I am sure you are aware.

Ms BOLTON: Minister, I refer to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements regarding the implementation of the improvement of water resource management. There has been much talk already here today on that. Given the projected increase in the population of the Sunshine Coast by a quarter of a million people, and with 67 per cent—or, as you said, 65 per cent—of Queensland in drought, what infrastructure, besides those projects that have been spoken about today, is in the pipeline for water collection and storage? What is being looked at? When will it be developed for those areas that we have not spoken about today that are in dire need of assistance?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. It is an important issue. I know that my electorate had a few big holes and cranes in it in procuring a pipeline from Sparkes Hill, which is in my electorate, to the Sunshine Coast to increase the capacity of the water grid to the Sunshine Coast. That was completed only last year. That would increase water security to the Sunshine Coast immediately.

You are absolutely correct that 65 per cent of the state is drought-declared, which is terrible for our farming communities. We have demonstrated specific commitments: Rookwood Weir; the Townsville pipeline, with \$215 million; and the state's Dam Improvement Program, with \$145 million for last financial year and the current financial year. We have already talked about Rookwood Weir at some length. Rookwood will be high-priority water for Gladstone and also for associated agriculture in that region. We have committed \$225 million for the Townsville pipeline, providing much needed water security for Townsville. Let us hope the federal government continue with their commitment for stage 2 of the project.

Raising Burdekin Falls Dam is a large issue. SunWater has completed preliminary assessments of raising Burdekin Falls Dam. This work has established that there is potential for sufficient water demand to exceed the current available water from the existing Burdekin Falls Dam in the short to medium term. SunWater's assessments include investigating the demand for water and supply options for meeting those demands in the region, including the potential for raising the wall. At this stage, Burdekin Falls Dam is considered a priority for further assessment in this catchment.

There are a number of competing water supply options across the Burdekin Basin which may have overlapping implications in terms of available water resources and potential water customers. We have already heard the CEO of SunWater talking about the Dam Improvement Program. Through our bulk water businesses we are making significant investment in the state's dam safety improvement program. Public safety is an absolute priority for this government. In response to these challenges, both SunWater and Seqwater are delivering dam improvement programs to ensure that dams comply with the latest safety standards, meaning they can continue to function safely during extreme weather events.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will very briefly go to the member for Maiwar for a quick last question.

Mr BERKMAN: Thank you, Chair. It is a quick one to the DG. Mr Purtill, you would be aware of section 1250D(5) in the Water Act, which creates an exemption from the requirement to apply for an associated water licence in limited circumstances where the chief executive is satisfied that certain criteria are met. Can you confirm for us that Adani is the only company or mining lease holder to be exempt from making an associated water licence application under this section?

Mr Purtill: Thank you very much for the question. To ensure that I am accurate in my response I will take the question on notice and get an answer for you.

Mr BERKMAN: Thanks very much.

CHAIR: We will now take a break. We have some questions on notice that we will come back to before the end of the next session at 12.15 pm. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will recommence at 11.15 am with the examination of estimates for mining and resources.

Proceedings suspended from 11.01 am to 11.15 am.



CHAIR: The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the mining and resources portfolio. Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Dr LYNHAM: Thank you, Chair. Firstly, allow me to place on the parliamentary record my deepest sympathies to the family and friends of the six Queensland mine and quarry workers who have passed over this past year. This is totally unacceptable. Any loss of life or serious injury is unacceptable. As I have said repeatedly, the health and safety of our 50,000 mine and quarry workers is paramount.

In the past two weeks I brought together companies and workers' representatives to recommit to worker safety. I have obtained a commitment for a statewide safety reset, which is now underway. I am aware that Anglo American, Glencore and BMA-BHP are working on safety reset dates and that operational staff from George Fisher Mine stopped work on Monday for their discussions on risk and safe practice with management and relevant union representatives. This will happen progressively at every site involving every worker by the end of August.

Last week reset materials were distributed statewide for individual sites to tailor to their own rostering and operational requirements. I table those materials and acknowledge the contribution of industry and unions as well as my departmental staff in finalising these so quickly. I look forward to continuing to work together on reforms to strengthen safety culture in the resources sector, including legislative reforms such as this government's proposal to actively consider the offence of industrial manslaughter.

On health and safety matters this budget continues the government's focus on tackling coal workers' pneumoconiosis and other mine dust lung diseases. Over the past three years we have made significant reforms to the identification and prevention of this insidious disease and to the safety net for affected workers. This continues in this budget, with \$1.2 million for a new mobile health screening service to complement existing services to ensure medicals for workers are available throughout regional Queensland. Chair, if I may, I will now turn to other resource related matters.

Since 2015 this government has released more than 39,000 square kilometres of land for gas exploration, over a fifth of it guaranteed to be for Australian buyers. In fact, last year Queensland supplied around a quarter of the gas that flowed to the east coast domestic market. Senex is expecting to produce gas by the end of 2019 from its Project Atlas located in the Surat Basin. This petroleum lease was the first area granted with an Australian market supply condition in March 2018. In yet another first, an Australian first, we have set aside land for potential gas producers to supply domestic manufacturers. This initiative will support hundreds of local manufacturing jobs and support investment of approximately \$100 million at Gibson Island over the next three years. I can advise the committee that Queensland's next exploration program is being developed for release early next year, and this program will identify further areas for domestic gas.

The government's four-year \$27 million Strategic Resources Exploration Program continues to support resource success and jobs. In 2019-20, \$12.7 million will be allocated to this program, including \$6.3 million to help with base metals discovery in the North West Minerals Province and \$384,000 to attract new investment from explorers, developers and customers.

The resources sector is central to Queenslanders' lives. It provides royalties to fund schools, teachers, hospitals and nurses. It generates thousands of jobs for Queenslanders from Weipa to the Gold Coast and to the far south-west. It provides the mineral and energy resources to generate electricity, make steel, manufacture solar panels and that most essential of our tools, our mobiles. In this budget and beyond the Palaszczuk government will continue to seek to facilitate the industry's growth in the interests of Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will now open questioning. Member for Burdekin, do you want to lead off?

Mr LAST: On behalf of the LNP, I also pass on my sympathies to the families and friends of those miners who lost their lives this year. Unfortunately, most of those fatalities occurred in my electorate. I know that it has a big impact on a lot of communities in my electorate. Director-General, I refer to page 7 of the SDS relating to mineral and energy resource services and to resource safety and health. Can you please give me the details that relate to the number of quarry-specific inspections conducted yearly for the past four years?

Mr Purtill: In order to ensure that I give you accurate information, I will take that question on notice and endeavour to provide a response as quickly as possible.

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to have that question taken on notice.

Mr LAST: Director-General, what was the department's target for audits to conduct in 2018-19 for coalmines inquiries, and how many inspections were undertaken?

Mr Purtill: With your indulgence, I will ask the Executive Director of Resources Safety and Health to give you a specific update on that.

CHAIR: As I said, we can examine past expenditure but it has to show a pattern as to future expenditure in the 2019-20 budget as well. Mr Stone?

Mr Stone: I will just give the headline number for inspections for the entire Mines Inspectorate and then move to the detailed number. For 2018-19, planned inspections were 1,180. We reached 90 per cent of those combined inspections. In coal we achieved 396 inspections, which was 91 per cent of our planned number. In mineral mines and quarries we achieved 784, which was actually 120 per cent of our planned number. I would be happy to expand on why that was.

Mr LAST: If you would not mind, on the quarrying side of it.

Mr Stone: Certainly. For the quarry side, our planning 12 months prior considered that we would do a number of detailed, deep-dive inspections around fatal hazards and critical controls. As the year panned out, sadly with multiple fatalities in quarrying and our increasing focus on respirable crystalline silica, we changed our plan as we went. We did fewer of those deeper dive audits and inspections that take multiple days and instead prioritised many more shorter inspections looking at respirable dust controls and at guarding and isolation, the root cause of one of the fatalities this year.

Mr LAST: Director-General, have you requested more resources for mine safety inspections, and have these resources been provided?

CHAIR: Before you answer that, we have had this particular line of questioning in years past. If we stray into areas of policy, bear that in mind. Also, if we are talking about cabinet submissions that invokes its own standing orders. I will let the officer deal with that in whichever way he sees fit.

Mr Purtill: I will elaborate on the planned numbers of inspectors for the financial year 2019-20. A commitment has been made to add additional resources in 2019-20. As at 30 June, the Mines Inspectorate comprised 22 inspectors of mineral mines and quarries and 22 inspectors of coalmines. In response to the recent fatalities in the mining industry and the inspectorate's response to the underground fire at Goonyella coalmine, the minister has announced that there will be three additional mines inspectors as well as an additional chief inspector. We will have a chief inspector for coalmines and a chief inspector for metallurgical mines and quarries.

The additional resources will be located in regional offices to provide effective oversight to operations located across the state. With these additional resources, the total number of mines inspectors will be 48, the highest number in a decade. The additional inspectors will possess a range of statutory, vocational and tertiary qualifications dependent on the need at the time they were recruited. This is in addition to a commitment to additional occupational hygienists that we are deploying into the Bowen Basin.

The qualifications we are seeking for those inspectors include degrees in engineering and/or science; first-class, second-class or deputy certificates of competency; certificates in open-cut examination in underground mine management; postgraduate studies and professional certifications in occupational hygiene—I mentioned the hygienists—geotech engineering and particularly mine ventilation with respect to lessons learned from North Goonyella during the course of the year; workplace inspection diplomas; Certificate IV in Government Investigations; competency based training qualifications; and trade qualifications to ensure that we have a mix across our inspectors of the competencies we need for underground and open-cut coalmining and quarrying as best we can distribute those to where the need is.

Mr LAST: Are you satisfied that those additional resources meet your requirements?

CHAIR: Member for Burdekin, are you asking for an opinion?

Mr LAST: No.

CHAIR: Perhaps. Perhaps not. I will not rule that question out of order, even though it is asking for opinion. Once again, Director-General, answer that as you see fit.

Mr Purtill: Obviously I cannot proffer an opinion, but I can proffer the numbers. Certainly with the additional three mines inspectors and chief inspector as well as the occupational hygienists that were committed to previously, we will have the highest numbers of inspectors in the last decade, at 48. We are in a very strong position. Of course, that will not only provide us with greater physical presence in the field but also allow us to increase our compliance program. Unfortunately, as you are well aware, we have a number of significant investigations afoot.

Mr LAST: Minister, on Steve Austin's ABC Radio program on 16 July 2019 you refused to say whether your department had enough money to manage both the added workload to conduct fatal accident investigations and mine safety inspections. Minister, I will ask you again: do you have enough money and resources to conduct and meet all of your required mine safety obligations?

CHAIR: Minister, I am allowing that question. There is some repetition, but please answer as you see fit.

Dr LYNHAM: Thank you, Mr Chair. We requested further moneys in 2016 and that was granted in the 2016 budget process. We have also, as you will remember, 100 per cent cost recovery for our inspectors from industry. Industry has been extremely cooperative and, whatever it costs, we have 100 per cent cost recovery from industry.

Mr LAST: Director-General, in reference to page 7 of the SDS related to mineral and energy resource services referring to gas production and regulation, can you explain whether your department conducted modelling on the impact of the new 25 per cent increase in royalties on Queensland gas production and, if so, when it was provided to Treasury?

Mr Purtill: I thank you for the question. Questions pertaining to royalties are a matter for Treasury and the Treasurer.

Mr LAST: Minister, when were you first made aware that there was a proposal to raise gas royalties in the budget and what was your advice to the Treasurer?

Dr LYNHAM: Mr Chair, again, I am not allowed to expand on any cabinet deliberations.

CHAIR: Yes; thank you for that. Perhaps if you have a different line of questioning. Do you have further questions?

Mr LAST: Certainly, Mr Chair. Director-General, referring to page 7 of the SDS relating to mineral and energy resource services, can you explain what the department needs to finalise the approvals that remain outstanding on Acland stage 3 and whether this will be completed before 1 September 2019?

Mr Purtill: Thank you very much for the question. I am very happy to update you on where we are at with the New Acland stage 3 expansion project. The department has been working with the New Hope Group over recent years to understand the proposed stage 3 project and the timing implications of their approvals. The project, as you are aware, has received significant community interest and has a protracted legal history which is not uncommon with mining projects in recent years which of course comes with a particular level of burden around administrative efficacy in making sure that we have everything perfectly in order. There was an initial recommendation from the Land Court that the project should not proceed and this recommendation was then overturned but, again, you may be aware that it is still the subject of further appeal. I understand the proponent may be forced to reduce production while that appeal progresses and the final approvals are considered. We do understand that and so we are focused on the project.

I am currently ensuring that we are preparing the briefing package for the consideration of the minister for the mining lease applications and, like all approvals, the mining leases must be fully considered based on all of the facts and circumstances related to the decision. We will be putting forward a comprehensive decision brief for the minister. I am aware that the environmental authority has been issued and it was issued on 12 March 2019, but I can assure you that we have been working very closely with New Hope on both details around the mining lease but in particular the associated water licence. Of course, they are both necessary approvals required for any project to proceed. The mining lease in isolation is not on the critical path. Rather, it is the two approvals put together so, if I may, I would talk about the associated water licence because to get the project to move both have to happen.

Mr LAST: No, that is fine. Thank you, Director-General. I will pass to my colleague.

Mr WEIR: My question is to the minister much along the same subject. Some 150 direct jobs on the Darling Downs are on the line if this project is not ticked off by 1 September 2019. What are you doing to ensure that these 150 jobs are safeguarded, Minister?

CHAIR: I am not going to ask you to rephrase that. There is an opinion imputation in that question and a hypothetical. Minister, I will let you answer that as you see fit.

Dr LYNHAM: Thank you, Chair. There is no doubt that the Palaszczuk government has a strong record in supporting and advancing the resources sector. Some \$20 billion worth of investment and 7,000 jobs says it all. I reflect on the LNP's record. They did nothing whilst exploration fell off a cliff in Queensland. They opposed our concessions to exploration to kick off exploration, to resuscitate exploration, in this state. They opposed us. They destroyed—

Mr WEIR: Excuse me—

CHAIR: Do you have a point of order, member for Condamine?

Mr WEIR: I do. My question was specifically around Acland stage 3.

CHAIR: It was, but I am giving the minister some latitude because of potential breaching of standing orders in the question.

Dr LYNHAM: To direct your question, member for Condamine, the New Acland stage 3 project has received significant community interest and has a protracted legal history. There was an initial recommendation of the Land Court that it should not proceed. Elements of this recommendation were then overturned and the Land Court produced a new recommendation for the project to proceed with new conditions and these conditions revolved largely around lowering noise limits from the project. From 6 to 10 pm the noise limit has reduced from 42 decibels to 35 decibels. From 10 to 7 the noise limit has reduced from 37 decibels to 35 decibels. This required the proponent to seek a change to their Coordinator-General conditions to reflect the new noise limits. The Land Court also recommended that the mining leases only be granted for 25 years and that the proponent conduct a survey to investigate the location of an historic gravesite. On 2 February 2019 the Coordinator-General granted New Acland's application to change the noise conditions as recommended by the Land Court. With the new recommendation in place, the Department of Environment and Science granted the environmental authority for this project in February this year. Importantly, a mining lease cannot be granted to a project until it has passed this hurdle first. The mining lease applications, as the director-general has said, are currently being processed by the department and assessed by the department.

The last major approval required for the project to proceed is the associated water licence. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy is currently assessing the associated water licence application, including the consideration of over 500 submissions that were lodged during the public notice period. I have been advised by the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy that the application and draft decision will be referred to the Department of Environment and Science for its review as required under the Water Act 2000 during August 2019. As such, I am advised that a decision on the associated water licence will be made by the end of September 2019. Like all approvals, the mining leases and associated water licence will be fully considered based on all of the facts and circumstances relevant to the decisions.

Mr LAST: My question is to the minister with reference to page 24 of the SDS relating to the income statement explaining variations in the financial statements with regard to the Gas Action Plan. Minister, in this same room at last year's estimates you gave a commitment that the Queensland Gas Action Plan that was announced in 2015 would be delivered by the end of the year. Can you give a date when Queenslanders will get to see the long anticipated Gas Action Plan, or have you abandoned it?

CHAIR: Okay; rephrase. You are breaching standing orders.

Mr LAST: Can you give a date, Minister, when Queenslanders will get to see the Gas Action Plan?

Dr LYNHAM: Can I just make a small correction? The EA for New Acland was issued on 12 March 2019, not February. I apologise to the committee.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Dr LYNHAM: In regard to the gas action plan, the Queensland government has decided to delay the final release of the gas action plan. This has been necessary because of the evolving issues around the east coast gas market and ongoing policy uncertainty in other jurisdictions, specifically the federal government.

While the gas action plan has not been publicly released, the government has not been idle. Queensland leads the nation when it comes to gas policy and is doing the heavy lifting on gas supply for the eastern states. Because of the inability of the federal government to have any gas policy, it has been like trying to hit a moving target with our gas action plan. In Queensland, we have just simply taken action where the federal government has inaction and is also trying to stifle Queensland's gas production by producing market uncertainty and directly imposing restrictions on exports at its whim.

We have constantly been after the federal government to provide pipelines to move Northern Territory gas into Queensland. We have also had the first pipeline in action with the Jemena pipeline that I fought so hard to obtain for Queensland. That pipeline is now in operation. That is not a gas action plan; that is gas action.

We had the Labor opposition commit to supporting the Queensland government for further pipelines from Mount Isa through the Bowen Basin, connecting Townsville and, indeed, the whole Northern Territory market to Gladstone. We all know that, when it comes to electricity and when it comes to gas, increased supply means decreasing costs and that is what we have been doing. We released gas for domestic uses and a number of factories in Queensland—

Mr LAST: Point of order. This goes to relevance. It is a very specific question. When will it be released?

CHAIR: I believe the minister is coming to the answer.

Mr LAST: I hope so.

CHAIR: I do believe.

Dr LYNHAM: In terms of the gas action plan, I remind the member opposite that Queensland has been doing gas action. We have been acting where the federal government has had inaction. We now have Canberra negotiating with a South Australian senator over Queensland gas. Essentially, a South Australian senator is telling us what we should do with our gas, which is being negotiated by a federal LNP government. The Queensland LNP needs to speak up and talk to its mates and get things done.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 7 of the SDS, will the minister please inform the committee of the government's response to the recent tragic mining and quarrying fatalities?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. The loss of one life in the resources sector is one death too many. The loss of six mining and quarrying workers in the last 12 months is unacceptable. It is extremely distressing. Families expect that when a loved one departs for work they will return home safely after every shift. I have made it absolutely clear that the situation is unacceptable and requires strong and immediate action from industry.

From the start of this week, Queensland mines and quarries will implement a statewide safety reset with a targeted completion date by the end of August. This reset has been designed to facilitate discussions between management, operational staff and union representatives on risk and safe practice. Employers and employees alike will reflect upon why they are undergoing a safety reset, discuss site-specific safety history and safety culture, and hear from senior executives, union site representatives and the inspectorate. These resets will be tailored to the individual sites and their various rostering and operational requirements and are designed to cover all workers. I am advised that industry has commenced, with Anglo American, Glencore and BMA-BHP presently planning dates for resets and engaging with the Mines Inspectorate and stakeholders. I am advised that George Fisher Mine held its first reset yesterday. I visited Coppabella mine in Moranbah last week and heard from workers firsthand and site executives alike of the importance of cultivating a positive culture of safety onsite.

The Queensland government has allocated in this year's budget an additional \$1.68 million for more inspectors. Three new mines inspectors will be appointed as well as an additional chief inspector. The government, industry and unions have also committed to convening a mine health and safety forum as part of the Queensland Mining Industry Health and Safety Conference Queensland on the Gold Coast in late August. We have also committed to work together on reforms to strengthen safety and culture in the resources sector. This includes sanctions for reckless behaviour and legislative reforms, such as the government's proposal to actively consider the offence of industrial manslaughter, which exists in other industry sectors.

Two independent reviews are now underway into mining and quarrying safety, how industry can improve, how the Mines Inspectorate can be more effective and the currency of the state's mining health and safety legislation. These are due for completion before the end of the year. These findings will add to the comprehensive suite of initiatives that we have completed and will further complete in mining health and safety.

I offer my deepest sympathy to the families, friends and colleagues of the deceased. It is on all of us—government, industry and unions—to make safety our No. 1 priority and ensure that Queenslanders can come home safe to their loved ones.

Mr MADDEN: With reference to page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements, will the minister inform the committee how the Palaszczuk government's investment in mobile screening services will benefit workers in regional Queensland?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. As the member would be aware, since 2015 the Palaszczuk government has made several significant reforms in mining safety and health and invested considerably to ensure that our workers are safe. The Palaszczuk government has invested

\$25 million to deliver reforms to improve the safety and health of our mineworkers. Over the next two years, the government will commit a further \$11.57 million to sustain actions to address the reidentification of mine dust lung diseases, including coal workers' pneumoconiosis.

We are also investing an additional \$1.2 million into the health of Queensland coalmine workers, with plans to add a mobile health screening unit to the services provided by existing regional specialists. Thanks to changes made this year, all Queensland coalmine workers can receive a free respiratory health check. Current workers receive this through their employer, and retired or former coalmine workers can access free screening through the department via a number of frontline, regionally based medical centres. All screening providers have the right specialist knowledge and are accredited and registered with my department to perform respiratory health screening, with medical centres located in communities including Moranbah, Rockhampton, Mackay and Emerald. A new mobile screening service will provide another means for workers to get checked for mine dust lung disease including coal workers' pneumoconiosis and silicosis. The mobile unit will not replace local specialist capability; it will complement it.

I look forward to consulting with industry and stakeholders, including those local providers, on the best way to deliver this service and will be contacting our stakeholders for their input and feedback. Consultation will commence at the end of this month and my department will provide me with advice on implementation by the end of September.

We are currently undertaking work to identify areas where local practices can be supplemented by a mobile service, including consideration for onsite or town based delivery models, frequency and availability, types of medical examinations performed, quality control and associated logistical manning and maintenance requirements. My department will also monitor performance of the unit following implementation to ensure it is delivering what it is intended to.

I encourage all workers to make sure they have their five-yearly health work check and former or retired workers to call the Coal Mine Workers' Health Scheme Health Surveillance Unit on 38185420 and book a free respiratory health check today. To date, 76 retired and former workers have taken the opportunity to have this important health check. As a doctor, I know that early detection is critical and, as the mines minister, I know that support is available if signs of lung disease are identified.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 2 of the SDS and the department's contribution to creating jobs and a strong economy, can the minister please inform the committee about the number of jobs in the resources sector provided to Queensland, in particular to my electorate of Mount Ommaney, and whether he is aware of any other economic benefits?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for her question. I know she is a great supporter of the mining and petroleum industries that are so important to Queensland. The Queensland Resources Council likes to say that Brisbane is the largest mining town in Queensland with more than 126,000 people whose jobs depend on mining. When I come off the plane at Brisbane Airport, I might be coming back from Sydney, Canberra, Cairns, Townsville or Mount Isa, you cannot help but notice the number of people in high-vis that are at Brisbane Airport. Brisbane is, indeed, a mining town.

Mining is not just important to our wonderful regional towns like Moura, Blackwater, Chinchilla, Moranbah, Weipa and Mount Isa, it is important to all the cities and towns across Queensland and, indeed, to our nation. This is because for every worker in high-vis there are a raft of people in transport, in catering, in legal, in accounting offices and IT firms and just about any other job that you can think of that is providing services to mining and petroleum operations in this state. Mining and petroleum are vitally important to this state. The mining industry is good for Queensland in many ways. It brings important investment to this state. It earns export income. It underwrites our currency and allows us to purchase goods and services from overseas, but most importantly it creates jobs for Queenslanders and there is nothing more important to individuals and to families than having a good job. These benefits are often forgotten or deliberately ignored by those who oppose mining.

The mining sector in Queensland employs people directly in its operations. These are new job opportunities in regional Queensland which help keep our regions healthy. I know the member for Mount Ommaney, who supports a strong resources sector, will be pleased to know that even though she does not have an operating mine in her electorate there are 3,445 direct and indirect jobs in the resources sector in Mount Ommaney. Let me warn the member for Mount Ommaney that lurking close behind her is the member for Maiwar. He may be a little disappointed when I tell him he has 3,049 resource sector jobs in his electorate. I am sure he is keen to see these jobs grow in his electorate. I imagine the member for Maiwar will get that out on social media rapidly.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to page 7 of the Service Delivery Statements, the government's domestic-only gas tenement program has been running for some time now. Will the minister update the committee on the benefits this program has provided to Queenslanders?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the honourable member for the question because it is a very timely question. The Palaszczuk government released its first domestic gas block in an offer made only in 2017. In the past few months we have seen the fruit of this release. This has been a remarkable performance. In large part, the success we are seeing is a consequence of the hard work and commitment of the successful tenderer, Senex Energy. Senex are a mid-level Queensland gas company and the development of this block is a credit to them: to Ian Davies, the CEO, and to his team. Since being granted tenure for the block in March 2018 Senex has made remarkable progress. Already Project Atlas has signed contracts with CSR supporting 200 jobs and with Orora to supply three manufacturing plants in Queensland. Success of Project Atlas is partly due to the cooperation between Senex and its construction partner Jemena. Jemena is building a \$140 million pipeline and processing facility that will connect Project Atlas to the Wallumbilla gas hub in south-west Queensland. Senex's Project Atlas is just the beginning. There is more to come.

The Palaszczuk government has released 8,522 square kilometres of prospective land with domestic or manufacturing supply conditions. Blocks from these releases have been awarded to Senex, Central Petroleum, Armour Energy, Chi Oil and Gas, Santos, Shell and APLNG. The key to the release of these domestic and manufacturing blocks is that they allow for more gas to be brought to market. That is the key: more gas from more fields because more gas in the system is the only long-term way to deal with supply and, ultimately, with price. That is why the Commonwealth government's gas policy is so frustrating. Its policy, as we know today, is to conduct an annual review of supply adequacy, to threaten to reserve gas, but ultimately to do nothing. It has never consulted with Queensland on this policy. As I said before, we can now read in the paper that its policy is now at the beck and call of a South Australian crossbench senator, and those opposite sit in muted silence.

Mr MADDEN: Following on from my previous question, with reference to page 7 of the Service Delivery Statements, the government recently announced the winner of its first gas tenement release on condition that the gas produced from the block must be supplied to domestic manufacturers. Will the minister update the committee on how many jobs have been secured as a result of this release?

Dr LYNHAM: I thank the member for the question. The awarding of ATP2046 to a joint venture between APLNG and Armour Energy to be developed to supply gas to the manufacturing sector only follows from the Palaszczuk government's successful policy of allocating new acreage to the domestic gas market. The allocation of a block to manufacturing was the next logical step to our already successful domestic gas release program. Our manufacturers require gas as a feedstock and as a specialised heat and energy source. The key outcome of granting ATP2046 to APLNG and Armour is that they have in turn sold gas to a number of manufacturing customers. The first of these was Incitec Pivot Fertilisers plant at Gibson Island. Gas is important to Incitec Pivot Fertilisers because it is the basic feedstock needed in their production process. Securing of this gas supply over a period of three years means Incitec Pivot Fertilisers will be able to continue to operate and continue to employ more than 400 workers at this site.

As I have said, this release flows directly from the Palaszczuk government's domestic gas supply policy. This is a policy that those opposite criticised when it was first announced. This was after three years in government when they did nothing. Every now and then the minister for energy at that time would mutter a few vague threats but they did nothing. They were happy to criticise our policy which brings more gas into the market, but they said nothing when Malcolm Turnbull arbitrarily threatened Queensland's gas industry. That was without a word of consultation from Canberra with us. They are still afraid to stand up for Queensland and they are still afraid to stand up for 400 jobs at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers.

Last week in the very first week of the new federal parliament we saw the Prime Minister and Cormann horsetrading about Queensland gas with a crossbench senator from South Australia—again without a word of consultation with Queensland. I wonder when the LNP is seriously going to stand up for Queensland, Queensland interests, 400 jobs at Incitec Pivot Fertilisers and jobs around this state. When are they going to stand up to their mates in Canberra and say 'enough!?' This is the opposite. This is the difference between the Palaszczuk government and the opposition: we stand up for Queensland in mining, energy, power prices and gas supply. We stand up for Queensland and for Queensland families. We will continue to stand up to Canberra in the best interests of Queensland families, but from those opposite and their mates in Canberra there is silence.

Mr MICKELBERG: In reference to page 7 of the SDS relating to mineral and energy resource services and specifically referring to gas production and regulation, can the Director-General please outline the regulatory health and safety fees imposed by your department on animal biogas production systems as well as CSG production under the Petroleum and Gas (Safety) Regulation 2018?

Mr Purtill: Given the specificity of the request, I ask to take that on notice and get you the exact details. The minister can answer one of the previous questions that we took on notice.

Dr LYNHAM: With your permission, Chair.

CHAIR: We will come back to that at the end.

Mr MICKELBERG: Are you happy to take that on notice, Minister?

Dr LYNHAM: Yes, I am.

CHAIR: There are a number of questions that we need to clear up at the end of this session. We will come back to those.

Mr MICKELBERG: Minister, can you explain to me why Queensland's livestock producers looking to install and operate biogas systems designed to capture methane to use as energy are being charged and held to the same regulatory standard and fees as CSG wells?

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take that on notice.

CHAIR: Minister, obviously that may involve the department of agriculture. Can we ensure that this is relevant to this department? If not, we can refer it to agriculture.

Mr WEIR: It is about gas.

CHAIR: Yes, but we will make sure that that is spelt out.

Mr LAST: I refer to page 7 of the SDS relating to Mineral and Energy Resource Services and I refer to the department's role in the management of mineral resources to ensure they are being used in a sustainable way. Director-General, in your role in managing the department's interactions with the resource sector and following the QRC *State of the sector* report released over the weekend, which highlighted that uncertainty and poor state regulations were the No. 1 problem facing the sector, have these issues been raised with you and have you made the minister aware of them?

Mr Purtill: We have an ongoing dialogue with the Queensland Resources Council, of course. I meet regularly with the chief executive, as does the minister separately to me. Issues around the regulation of the industry are always writ large in those discussions, be they the regulations that are relevant to the Department of Environment and Science or whether they are relevant to our department. I am aware that the recent quarterly report carried those concerns, which I think are a constant theme in the industry. We have worked very hard on the reduction of duplication and processes. I can give you some more detail on that, just in specific response to the recent criticisms. The report also does highlight the positives in the industry and particularly the growth spurt that it is enjoying at the moment.

The areas of criticism are always valid and we are always willing to hear that feedback and take it on board. We did have a commitment to look at regulatory duplication and we have done that. We consulted very widely with the industry and with all stakeholders, including environmental interests, about what their concerns might be. I am very happy to report to the committee that, in general, a large amount of those concerns were in perception rather than reality, notwithstanding the fact that the government stands by its rights of third-party appeal. I suppose that is an area that the industry was particularly concerned about, but it is something that is, in effect, legitimate rights for people.

Mr LAST: Minister, do you agree with the DG's comments that he believes there is more perception rather than reality?

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take that question.

CHAIR: I was going to say that that is asking for opinion, but I am sure the minister is happy to take it.

Dr LYNHAM: I am very happy to take it. I point out our record in the resources sector: 7,000 jobs and \$20 billion worth of investment. I can go through the list of mines that have opened during our tenure. I will go through a few: the Byerwen coalmine, \$1.7 billion; QCG's Charlie project, \$1.7 billion; Rio Tinto's Amrun project, \$2.36 billion; and MMG's Dugald River zinc mine, \$1.4 billion. Mines that have reopened include Isaac Plains, Blair Athol, Collinsville and Gregory. I can go through a countless number of mines that have opened. There are still jobs out there. I think there are 1,300 jobs out there now, ready to fill, in the resources sector.

I know that the QRC put out a report, the main basis of which was the 10-year moratorium or the promise not to increase coal royalties for 10 years. I would like to know, with a \$7 billion black hole in the budget—and I know the energy policy will add another \$700 million onto the budget, so that is a \$7.7 billion black hole to fill—where it is going to come from.

Mr LAST: Point of order. It goes to relevance.

CHAIR: I am laying that one there. You asked for an opinion and you are currently getting one.

Dr LYNHAM: The LNP had a huge black hole in their budget reply speech. In their policy there is a \$7.7 billion black hole to fill. Where is it going to come from? There is only one way they know how to rein back the deficit and it is to sack public servants, decrease services—

Mr LAST: Mr Chair, point of order.

Dr LYNHAM: I will come straight back to relevance.

CHAIR: Just a minute; there is a point of order. Is it regarding relevance?

Mr LAST: It is.

CHAIR: I understand where you are coming from and I think the minister is wrapping up his answer right now.

Dr LYNHAM: I will wrap up. Let us talk about relevance in mining and what the LNP did for mining. Let us compare that to what we have in the mining industry now.

Mr LAST: Let's talk about the report from the weekend, Minister.

Dr LYNHAM: Imagine what the QRC would say if the LNP got back into power, when they did nothing whilst exploration investment fell off a cliff. They destroyed social licence with poor legislation, which made mines very difficult to establish around the state.

Mr LAST: Point of order.

Dr LYNHAM: Consultation was non-existent.

CHAIR: One moment, Minister. We have a point of order, but, as I said, the minister is wrapping up his answer—

Mr MICKELBERG: Your confidence is misplaced.

CHAIR:—which is directly relevant to the question.

Dr LYNHAM: It is directly relevant.

Mr LAST: To the government budget?

Dr LYNHAM: There is only one government between the Newman government and our government that increased coal royalties.

Mr LAST: There is a report that came out on the weekend that criticised you. That is the question.

Dr LYNHAM: Only one increased coal royalties.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. This is probably a good time to go to the crossbench and the member for Mirani.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, I have spent 32 years in the mining industry. It has been a celebration until recently, when we lost some people. My sincere condolences go to those people's loved ones and families. Recently, I heard that you increased the inspectorate numbers. Is the depth of experience in the criterion of assessment for frontline people such as supervisors and superintendents taken into consideration by the government when hiring more inspectorate officers? Will the government make sure that those people are directly responsible and understand their roles and responsibilities so that the people at the mine face are protected, are worked with and have the understanding of the inspectorate? Will the inspectorate also understand what is expected at the mine site from the actual companies? I want to know that, because I think it has a great bearing on what we are doing going forward.

Dr LYNHAM: I respect the member's experience in the mining industry. I have been out there listening to everyone in the resources sector. I have done so previously and just last week, as I said before, I was out at a coalmine. I have had my inspectorate in. We have had companies in. We have had the forum as well, and the Mine Health and Safety Conference is coming up. It is great to hear from you with those ideas. I am taking everything on board. Everything I possibly can do to protect the health

and safety of our workers will be done. I am out there listening. There is not a day that goes by that I am not on the phone, listening to people regarding the health and safety of our workers, especially after those six deaths—tragedies for six families in our state.

I will ask the executive director to fill in some of those details. I would be only too pleased, when we meet again, to personally give you a detailed briefing about what we are doing in mine health and safety in this state.

Mr Stone: I acknowledge the depth of experience behind your question. I would say three things. Firstly, as you may be aware, in terms of their histories and backgrounds, our 44 mines inspectors come from site senior executives through to deputies, open-cut examiners, underground mine managers and workers. Their breadth of experience and depth of experience, I think, is one of the key elements of the Mines Inspectorate. It means that the conversations they have when they go to site are not exclusively with site senior executives. They will talk to and meet with site safety and health representatives. In the coalmining area we meet with the industry safety and health representatives and hold workshops with them. We have district worker representatives on the mineral, mines and quarries side. I am confident that we are hearing and seeing all elements and all aspects of the mining operation.

Your point specifically around frontline supervision and superintendents, those who we place in positions of responsibility for supervising and ensuring that many, many workers return safely home, are a critical position. In the last 12 months we have made reforms around ensuring that statutory ticket holders are appropriately qualified. We have made reforms around extending minimum safety and health training requirements to those frontline positions and we are working very closely with industry and the union to make further reforms.

The Western Australian review into mining fatalities in 2012 was quite clear when it drew the line between fatal incidents and serious accidents and the experience level both within industry but at a specific site of those frontline superintendents. We know that the role is important and I believe that the fatality review which is ongoing in Queensland will draw similar conclusions. That is an evidence base and a responsible regulator then takes that evidence base and uses it to drive regulatory reform.

CHAIR: For the last question we will go to the member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: I have one final question for the minister. Across the world we are seeing countries and governments turning away from thermal coal in favour of cleaner energy sources. This budget anticipates a decline in our thermal coal exports. Can you please outline for us how the Queensland government is preparing for this inevitable decline in our thermal coal export market, including specifically how you plan to support regional thermal coal workers and communities through this transition?

Dr LYNHAM: I know the member is deeply concerned about a transition to a renewable economy. It has only been the Palaszczuk government that has overseen this responsibility and managed growth in the renewables sector. Climate change is real. We are addressing it. We would like a federal government to come on board with that. We are very disappointed that the emissions reduction policy in the NEG was abandoned.

To put the Queensland coal industry into perspective, in the world there are 8,000—the figure of 8,000 is the only figure to remember—million tonnes of coal produced per annum. Of that, China produces 4,000 million tonnes of coal. Half the world's coal is produced by China. In terms of Queensland exports of coal we are looking at 200 million tonnes per annum. Of that, 60 million tonnes per annum is thermal.

We have 8,000 million tonnes produced in the world and only 60 million tonnes is exported from Queensland. That puts it into perspective. The export of coal throughout the world compared to consumption is quite low because coal is a very common mineral—you can just dig it up in your backyard. A lot of countries have coal reserves—Russia, China and Europe. Great Britain had coal reserves. The largest coalmine in the world is Wyoming in the US. It produces 120 million tonnes per annum. It is double the size of Queensland's total thermal coal exports. That mine in Wyoming is double the size of our total thermal coal exports.

I wanted to bring that into perspective for everyone here—that is, the size of climate change and Queensland's impact on climate change. Of the 8,000 million tonnes we export 60 million tonnes. We export because we are lucky to have Korea and Japan that do not have a lot of their own coal reserves. We were very lucky to develop that market. That is why we export.

In terms of looking after our workers in thermal coal, there will be a natural transition over years. Queensland will have a strong coal industry for years and years to come because we have metallurgical coal. Mongolia, ourselves and some mines in the US are the only ones that have high-grade metallurgical coal. We will still have a strong coal industry for years and years to come.

I note in the Greens national policy that you allow for open-cut mining of metallurgical coal as we do. You obviously support a coalmining industry in this state for years to come as we do. There will be an economic transition away from thermal coal as renewables become cheaper. We see now that solar panels are a 10th of the price they were 10 years ago. Prices are continuing to fall. We are seeing prices for wind, solar and renewables fall at rapid rates. There will be an economic impetus as coal-fired power stations, as they are in Queensland, become extremely expensive compared to renewable generation.

We have to have plans in place. Minister Grace is the minister responsible for that. I suggest that when the minister has her time before estimates that that is the appropriate time to ask that question. We support coal in Queensland. I thank the committee for allowing me the opportunity to put into perspective how Queensland can have a strong, dominant and viable coal industry for years and years to come because we have metallurgical coal.

CHAIR: The time allocated for the consideration of the expenditure for the portfolio of natural resources, mines and energy has expired. We have eight questions on notice and a letter to table. First of all, we have all looked at that letter. The committee is happy for that to be tabled. We will go to questions on notice. We will start with quarry inspections.

Dr LYNHAM: We were asked how many inspections of quarries there have been over the past five years. The figures are: in 2014-15, 537; in 2015-16, 557; in 2016-17, 549; 2017-18, 473; and 2018-19, 537. That is an average of 531 inspections with a 10 per cent variance per year over the five years.

CHAIR: Are there any other answers that you have?

Dr LYNHAM: We have the one around conflict of interest. Directors of Energy Queensland are required to follow the Energy Queensland directors' conflict of interest policy and securities dealings policy. The policy is referenced in the Energy Queensland board charter which is available on the Energy Queensland website. I am advised that all board members have complied. The Energy Queensland Ignite Employee Recognition Program, would you like me to follow with that answer, Mr Chair?

CHAIR: Yes.

Dr LYNHAM: Ignite is a reward and recognition program of Energy Queensland that was released in the 2018-19 financial year. The program includes facilities for employees to send reward and recognition e-cards and messages of thanks and also include a yearly event for employees who have made transformational changes to the business. Whilst in its infancy, approximately 50 per cent of field employees have signed up, with the second stage of awareness to be rolled out in coming months. This year an event to acknowledge these employees was held in Townsville. It was held to align with another internal Energy Queensland event in Townsville. Flights, accommodation and related costs for these employees were approximately \$15,000.

In terms of Emu Swamp Dam, the question was asked: are there any outstanding regulatory approvals from the department associated with the Emu Swamp Dam project? The answer is that there has been no formal application for regulatory approvals to DNRME associated with the Emu Swamp project. One of the main challenges associated with the Granite Belt Irrigation Project relates to aggregating sufficient water entitlements to support the desired 3,900 megalitres per annum of water supplied from sources, including unallocated water reserves and trading and secure existing water allocations that are held by local water allocation owners and may not be used currently.

The department is considering a process for how all unallocated water in the Border Rivers and Moonie plan area is to be made available, and this will require discussions with a range of stakeholders. Unallocated water will be managed and ultimately released in accordance with the relevant regulatory instruments including the Water Act and water plan. The department is working actively to support the proponent on its regulatory requirements and other issues associated with the project.

The member for Maiwar asked the director-general whether Adani was the only mining project exempt from being required to apply for an associated water licence. I believe that the premise of the question is wrong. Adani applied for an associated water licence on 20 October 2016. The application was rigorously assessed and approved with conditions, and in accordance with the requirements of the

Water Act, by the delegate in the Department of Natural Resources and Mines on 29 March 2017. May I just add that every mine in Queensland has the right to pump out water from that mine to make sure that mine is safe for daily operation.

CHAIR: There was a further question taken on notice.

Dr LYNHAM: I have no further answers at this stage.

Mr BATT: Mr Chair, can I follow up on an answer?

CHAIR: No. We have some outstanding questions on notice. You can check the exact wording of those outstanding questions in the proof transcript of this session of the hearing. That will be on the parliamentary website in approximately two hours. Those answers need to be provided to the secretariat by 5 pm on Friday, 26 July 2019.

Mr BATT: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. In relation to one of the responses given by the minister, I wanted to confirm that that was a correct amount. The question asked earlier in relation to the Ignite Awards was about how much for the awards program. The minister has advised \$15,000 for flights and meals.

CHAIR: I thought we had the answer to that question. Minister, I am allowing you to elaborate briefly.

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to take that question on notice.

Mr BERKMAN: I raise a point of order. Chair, I want a clarification that the question that was taken on notice earlier referred specifically to an exemption under one provision of the Water Act.

CHAIR: Under one provision of the Water Act.

Mr BERKMAN: Under a particular provision of the Water Act. Reference to applications for associated water licences that are unaffected is actually to dodge the question that was taken on notice.

Dr LYNHAM: I am happy to clarify that for the committee.

CHAIR: We have two clarifications. The same comments I made about the provision of those answers will apply. Thank you, Minister and departmental officers, for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 12.45 pm.

Dr LYNHAM: Can I make a brief statement, Chair?

CHAIR: Yes, certainly.

Dr LYNHAM: I would like to close by thanking everyone involved in the estimates process. This is an important exercise. It helps demonstrate a government's accountability to its constituents. The Palaszczuk government committed to the people of Queensland to be accountable, and it is a badge of honour I wear proudly as a member of this government. I acknowledge and thank the chair and all of the committee members and the other attending members who have participated.

I know that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes to prepare for estimates. I again thank my director-general and his staff, chief executives of our government owned corporations and their staff, as well as my ministerial staff. I also thank the staff of the parliament who are here performing their committee duties as well.

CHAIR: We will resume at 12.50 pm with the examination of estimates for the portfolios of the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning.

Proceedings suspended from 12.23 pm to 12.51 pm.

**ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND
AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE—STATE
DEVELOPMENT, MANUFACTURING, INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLANNING****In Attendance**

Hon. CR Dick, Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning

Mr B Kerdel, Chief of Staff

Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning

Ms T Power, Acting Director-General

Mr M McKee, Deputy Director-General Business, Commercial and Performance

Mr S Gately, Acting Director, Estimates Coordination

Mr B Broe, Coordinator-General

Mr J Camden, Acting General Manager, Economic Development Queensland

Building Queensland

Mr D Gould, Chief Executive Officer

South Bank Corporation

Mr B Delves, Chief Executive Officer



CHAIR: The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 3.45 pm and will suspend proceedings during this time for a break between 2.15 pm and 2.30 pm.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, arguments or opinions. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

The committee has authorised its hearings to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photography and video recording of the proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. Also, I remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of state development, manufacturing, infrastructure and planning open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you can make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. I thank you and the committee for the opportunity to address you at the start of this hearing. At the outset, I would like to make it clear that it is my intention and that of the department to answer all questions fully today. Where that is not possible, we will endeavour to provide a response by the end of today's hearing. That will be my preferred position, rather than taking questions on notice.

I now turn to my portfolio responsibilities and the role that the Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning is playing in growing optimism and opportunity in the Queensland economy. Queensland has long been known as the sunshine state but, as I have said on

many occasions, it should also be known as the sunrise state—the emerging home of new ideas and new technologies in new industries. That is why this morning I announced an Australian first: the establishment of the Queensland advanced robotics manufacturing hub in Northgate. Our vision is for Queensland to become the acknowledged centre of national excellence when it comes to robotics in manufacturing. We are proud to have committed almost \$8 million to this \$18 million project, and with our partners UAP and the Queensland University of Technology our state is once again leading the way.

There is another future on the table: not the sunshine state or the sunrise state but the radioactive state. The reality is that we are seeing every day a relentless push by the Morrison government to establish a nuclear power plant in Queensland. A nuclear power plant would be a disaster for industry, for jobs and for growth in our state. Look at Fukushima. Fukushima is a region in Japan, but now it is simply shorthand for a toxic meltdown.

We have a great tourism industry in Queensland, but how many of those tourists would want to come to the home of nuclear waste? Just today in the *Courier-Mail* I read an article in which the Morrison government's energy minister, Angus Taylor, refused to rule out a nuclear power plant on the Gold Coast. I table a copy of that article for the members of the committee. The Prime Minister is an old ad man from a long time ago. You can just imagine the Prime Minister's new tourism slogan: 'How good is Queensland? The home of Australian nuclear energy.' What about this: 'How good is the Gold Coast? Beautiful one day; radioactive the next.'

We have great agricultural industries linked to great manufacturers in food and fibre processing in this state. That hinges on our reputation as a clean, green state, and that will be destroyed—totally destroyed—if we become the home of nuclear power in this country.

I am interested in energy industries because we have new energy industries—industries that will create jobs for our children—that will be completely gutted by this proposal. Through my portfolio, as honourable members of the committee know, we are building a new hydrogen industry in Queensland. The vision of our hydrogen industry in this state is green hydrogen generated from renewable power that is exported to countries that want green, carbon-neutral power but lack the land mass or topography to do it. A nuclear power plant in Queensland would run renewables out of town. There is no market for Queensland in hydrogen created by using nuclear power. Forget about it. No-one is going to want it. We know what the experts say: a nuclear power plant can only be established with massive government subsidies—massive subsidies that would distort our new industry, strangling our efforts to create hydrogen. We are trying to get people to invest in renewables in Queensland to bring down power prices for industry, but they are not going to invest if there are thousands of nuclear megawatt hours going into the market. Queenslanders do not want this radioactive anvil dropped on our state.

The worst thing about it is that we know nuclear power stations need water, and they are generally located near the coast wherever they are built. All members who represent communities on or near the Queensland coast need to be prepared for that. The member for Bundaberg is here. It is his local MP, the federal member for Hinkler, Keith Pitt, who is leading the charge, along with leading LNP senator for Queensland James McGrath. They have been relentless in pursuing this since the election. The member for Bundaberg needs to stand up for his community and stand up to this nonsense. Does he want a nuclear power plant at Bundaberg or on the Burnett coast? Does he want that or not? If he opposes one in his community, will he join with me and our government to stand against the establishment of a nuclear power plant anywhere in Queensland?

The member for Glass House is here. What a perfect place for a nuclear power plant: the Sunshine Coast—absolutely prime! When is he going to say 'not for Glass House, not for the Sunshine Coast and not for Queensland'? I can tell you on behalf of Logan, the community where I live, that we do not want it. This is a defining issue of the budget and these estimates, and it will be a defining issue for Queensland going forward. I would be happy to provide further information to any member of the committee who might like to ask me a question, particularly the members for Bundaberg and Glass House. This is a perfect opportunity to ask me questions about the proposal. It is a golden opportunity to get clarity about this proposal and to say no to nuclear energy and the destruction it will cause to industry and our state in the future.

CHAIR: The committee will now examine the portfolio areas of state development and manufacturing. I call the member for Glass House.

Mr POWELL: My first question is to the acting director-general. I refer to the department's service summary for the declaration of further Cross River Rail PDAs on page 44 of the SDS. Will the proposed Cross River Rail Boggo Road station be declared a priority development area?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. I will have to get some detail on the PDA. It is certainly the intention, as I understand it, that all of the stations related to the Cross River Rail will be priority development areas. The Cross River Rail project will provide a new 10.2-kilometre rail line from Dutton Park to Bowen Hills and deliver 7,700 jobs. The project includes five new high-capacity stations at Boggo Road, Woolloongabba, Albert Street, Roma Street and Exhibition. Each station provides a unique opportunity to deliver urban renewal, to revitalise surrounding areas and to promote economic development. Economic Development Queensland is working with the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to enable the delivery of this project through the declared priority development areas where required. The Albert Street Cross River Rail PDA was declared in December 2018 to facilitate the delivery of development around and potentially over the new underground station. Albert Street will be the first Brisbane CBD station built in 120 years.

Mr POWELL: Thank you, Mr Chair. The question was actually about Boggo Road. I am just seeking some clarification about that.

CHAIR: I am sure the acting director-general is moving to finishing the answer.

Ms Power: The Cross River Rail Deliver Authority has been carrying out extensive planning for the proposed Cross River Rail stations at Roma Street, Exhibition, Woolloongabba and Boggo Road. This includes the potential declaration of PDAs at some of these locations.

Mr POWELL: So at this stage it is unclear; is that correct?

Ms Power: The government is yet to consider whether that would be a PDA.

Mr DICK: By way of clarity, Chair, it is the Minister for Economic Development who is responsible for declaring PDAs; it is not the department.

Mr POWELL: Acting Director-General, was any work undertaken by the department around the proposed new Dutton station near the Princess Alexandra Hospital?

Ms PUGH: Dutton Park?

Mr POWELL: No. Sorry, the new Dutton Park station.

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am not aware but I will come back to you with answers on that one.

Mr POWELL: Acting Director-General, has the department prepared any work on the possible Boggo Road PDA?

Ms Power: Thank you for the question. The Cross River Rail Delivery Authority is consulting with Economic Development Queensland around the potential for priority development areas. As the Cross River Rail is a project of state significance, the delivery authority has been delegated powers and functions under the Economic Development Act 2012 to plan and assess development within PDAs in consultation with the Brisbane City Council. As I said earlier, there has not yet been a decision around a PDA for Dutton Park.

Mr POWELL: I understand no decision has been made, but the question was whether the department has done any work.

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, we are possibly going into repetition now. I will allow that one through, but I will just advise you of how far you are straying.

Ms Power: I can confirm the work done, but it would be fair to say that the department, through Economic Development Queensland, is in consultation with the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority around the requirements.

Mr POWELL: As part of that work—

Mr DICK: Just on a point of clarification, I understand that this session is in two parts. The first part is state development and manufacturing and the second part is infrastructure and planning. The creation of PDAs is a planning decision, so I am just seeking clarity from you, Chair. Are we open-ended now with questions or are we going to abide by the decision of the committee, which was to have state development and manufacturing in the first part of the hearing and infrastructure and planning in the second part?

Mr POWELL: Mr Chair—

CHAIR: We will deal with this point of order first. We are in fact dealing with state development and manufacturing, and after the break it is infrastructure and planning. From what I am understanding, we are talking about PDAs along the Cross River Rail and from the information we have here it does come under planning. Is that correct?

Mr POWELL: Mr Chair, I would also point out that when PDAs are declared they become the responsibility of Economic Development Queensland, which does sit within the state development component of the minister's portfolio. Therefore, they are very—

CHAIR: Once they are declared.

Mr POWELL: They are very relevant, then.

CHAIR: I am going to say that—

Mr DICK: I do not really care, but let us not make a mockery of the decision the committee has made. If we are going to be open-ended, then staff, and I as minister, need to know that we are going to get questions from any part of the portfolio.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We are going to stick to what we have here. I am going to make a direction in this case. Seeing that it is dealing in the main with planning, we will do that in the second half. I ask the member for Glass House to stick with questions regarding state development and manufacturing.

Mr POWELL: Can I seek some clarification on whether questions to the Coordinator-General about his role in Cross River Rail relate to the state development component of the minister's portfolio or the planning component?

Mr DICK: There will be two aspects to that. Firstly, Cross River Rail is an infrastructure project and, secondly, any declaration—

Mr POWELL: But the Coordinator-General is part of the state development—

CHAIR: Thanks everyone. The first thing we have is that—

Mr DICK: It is a planning instrument. EDQ has always travelled with the planning minister. Whoever is the planning minister has been responsible for that.

Mr POWELL: The Coordinator-General sits under that.

CHAIR: We have the Coordinator-General listed in the first part, have we not? Yes. Anything that is regarding the Coordinator-General would go now. If you are talking about issues regarding planning, we will be dealing with infrastructure and planning after the break.

Mr POWELL: On the basis that the Coordinator-General is in the first part, can I refer a number of questions to the Coordinator-General, please.

CHAIR: Okay.

Mr POWELL: I refer to the department's service area objective of finalising Coordinator-General reports on page 7 of the SDS. I also note that there is publicly available a report prepared by the Coordinator-General on a website as of late June around Cross River Rail. Coordinator-General, your public report contains information relating to associated new infrastructure for the Boggo Road station, construction details and property settlement details. Could the Treasurer have accessed this report before it was publicly released?

Mr Broe: No.

CHAIR: Okay. You got an answer there.

Mr POWELL: Was information that was contained in that report provided to the Treasury department prior to it being made public?

Mr Broe: It certainly was not provided by me. The Cross River Rail Delivery Authority is the proponent. They submitted an application to me to assess a change to the EIS. I evaluated the change. I consulted on it. I can only talk about what we as the Office of the Coordinator-General did provide. The actual application was made public, but my evaluation, like all evaluations of major projects, was not made public. We consulted with the Cross River Rail authority on conditions and then I released my report online, so we did not have any interaction with Treasury or the Deputy Premier, nor should we have.

Mr POWELL: So the consultation included referring to the Treasurer's department and to the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority during the preparation of your report?

Mr Broe: I do not believe they were consulted, no. They would have had no need to be consulted. I put the application online and we consulted and sought submissions on the application, but in terms of producing my report and my evaluation with conditions, they were not consulted.

Mr POWELL: When did the minister first receive a draft of that report?

Mr Broe: Which minister?

Mr POWELL: Your minister.

Mr Broe: A draft? He did not receive any draft of the report. I produced a report and published it online. That is the way the process works. I am independent and the minister respects that. I evaluate a project, I produce a report, it is provided online and the proponent gets it just before it is put online. There is no need for anybody else to have it.

Mr POWELL: So no-one other than the Office of the Coordinator-General had access to the information contained in that report?

Mr Broe: In my evaluation report of the EIS, no. The proponent would have been consulted on the conditions. Whether they were given some chapters, possibly. I am not sure. I will have to check on that.

Mr POWELL: This is not only including the EIS. These are the changes to the EIS that you recently published.

Mr Broe: What I evaluated was a change to the EIS approvals. If Cross River Rail had an approval to an EIS and they wanted to make some changes and go into more detail—if they wanted to get that assessed and a decision made on it, that is what I assessed. It was a change to the EIS that I evaluated and consulted on.

Mr POWELL: Coordinator-General, when did you first become aware of the Treasurer's ownership of a property near the proposed Boggo Road Cross River Rail station?

Mr Broe: When did I first become aware? When I read it online.

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, remember we are actually examining the expenditure for the current financial year. I remind you that all these questions have to relate to the examination of the future expenditure. I am sure you are aware of that. I am just bringing that to your attention. Do we have further questions?

Mr POWELL: Yes, we do. Again, this relates to the Coordinator-General and the service area objective of finalising Coordinator-General reports on page 7 of the SDS. Noting that you have been involved with the Cross River Rail project for a number of years, did you undertake any work relating to the two rival bids, one of which proposed a station further away from the Treasurer's investment property?

Mr Broe: No, that is not my role. In evaluating the EIS or a change to the EIS we take what the proponent has given us and applied for and the stations that were there and I assessed their impacts. It is not my role to redesign or to evaluate options—and even more so in this case. As the chair of the Cross River Rail authority stated, there was a commercial negotiation process and a procurement process that involved companies. There was no role for the Coordinator-General. It is an independent regulatory assessment of a change.

Mr POWELL: Mr Chair, I will move away from the Coordinator-General, thank you. My next question is to the acting director-general. I refer to the total departmental expenses on SDS page 16. Across the department and all agencies under the administration of the minister, how much has been spent on advertising over the past financial year and how much is budgeted for this financial year?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question.

CHAIR: Please clarify that you are talking about advertising.

Mr POWELL: Advertising—

CHAIR: All forms?

Mr POWELL: Advertising over the past financial year and for the budgeted financial year.

Ms Power: I will say that the department adheres to whole-of-government processes for approving advertising and communication as well as the advertising code of conduct. We follow the whole-of-government sponsorship guidelines as well. The advertising can be split into campaign advertising and non-campaign. The budgets for 2019 are not yet set across the department at that degree of granularity. For 2018-19 the total expenditure on campaign advertising was \$237,052, which was actually a decrease on the previous year. Campaign advertising includes, for example, defence reports that are published in digital formats and in hard copy as part of attracting the defence industry to Queensland, promoting community engagement around master planning or planning events, promoting industrial and residential development projects to facilitate land sales, and supporting the successful attraction of proponents for proposals such as the Regional Export Distribution Centre.

Mr POWELL: How much has the department spent on sponsoring content written by the minister such as the sponsored content piece published in the national masthead the *Australian* on 29 May?

CHAIR: Once again, where is your relevance to the examination of future expenditure?

Mr POWELL: It is a question asking what is planned to be spent or has been spent on advertising including sponsored content written by the minister.

CHAIR: I will allow that one through. The acting director-general can answer that as she sees fit.

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. The department's advertising and sponsorship is designed to attract industry and investment and directly relates to the objectives of the department. It is not done as a corresponding support for the minister. It is about the portfolio and the department's responsibilities.

Mr POWELL: Can I then confirm what advice the department received as to whether the content in that specific article breached the government's Advertising and Marketing Communication Code of Conduct with specific reference to materials not giving prominence to the voice or image of a minister?

Mr MADDEN: Chair, I believe my friend is breaching standing order 115(c); he is asking the witness an opinion.

Mr POWELL: No. I was asking what advice was received regarding the government's Advertising and Marketing Communication Code of Conduct.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Glass House. I understand where the member for Ipswich West is coming from. We are not asking for opinions in this case; I get we are asking for advice. I caution the member for Glass House. Once again, he is tending towards repetition. The director-general may like to respond in the manner that she sees fit.

Ms Power: There was no specific advice provided to the minister.

Mr POWELL: To the department, sorry. What advice was provided to the department?

Ms Power: To the department from the minister?

Mr POWELL: No.

Ms Power: Advice from whom? To the department?

Mr POWELL: Regarding the government's Advertising and Marketing Communication Code of Conduct.

Ms Power: There was no specific advice provided.

Mr POWELL: I have one final question on this. Acting Director-General, how much was actually spent on that sponsored content article in the *Australian*?

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, as I said you are moving towards repetition. You have asked this particular question.

Mr POWELL: Asking for the amount is repeating something that I have already said? I am struggling to see how that is the case, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Yes, you are repeating a question there in this particular case. I understand what you are getting at that there. As I said, I see it as repetition, but I am going to give the acting director-general a chance to respond to this and we might move on from there.

Ms Power: I will come back to you on that before the end of the hearing.

Mr POWELL: Thank you, acting Director-General.

Mr BATT: My question is also to the acting director-general. Ms Power, I refer to page 7 of the SDS and the department's service of economic development through state development areas. During last year's estimates the director-general advised this committee that the first development within the Bundaberg SDA was approved for a solar farm. Has construction for this project started?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. The state development area is the responsibility of the Coordinator-General, but I will get advice on the solar farm. It is a CG project—it is a coordinated project. It is my understanding that the planning is happening and that the leasing has been done, but I will confirm that for you.

CHAIR: Member for Bundaberg, do you want to put that to the Coordinator-General?

Mr BATT: Yes, thanks, Mr Chair. Does he need me to ask the question again?

CHAIR: Coordinator-General, did you hear that question?

Mr Broe: Yes, thank you. I will have to check whether actual construction has started. It was certainly approved, as you know. We have been working very closely with a major company called Pacific Tugs and finalising their approval, which will be a major boost for the Bundaberg State Development Area where a new marine industry is based. We also have the Knauf Plasterboard factory already in the SDA—an investment of \$70 million and 70 jobs. We are working with a number of industries. I can appreciate the point that we need to get more development. There is a lot of support for the Bundaberg SDA. The council supports it very strongly. They want to see proactive, positive action taken to encourage development and give Bundaberg a good option instead of Gladstone. We are working with a number of industries.

In terms of the solar farm, I will have to check whether or not it has started. We are getting a lot of interest from developers and industry. A state development area is a long-term planning tool. We do not judge its effectiveness by how much development happens in the first 18 months. It protects land for the long term. It allows industries to co-locate near the port and create efficiencies and economies of scale and make use of the \$20 million gas pipeline that the government invested in. We think the signs are good and the infrastructure is in place and development will come there. We are getting very good signs as to what is happening there in Bundaberg. There is a lot of support to take this positive action to give Bundaberg every chance. I will come back to you with the specifics on the solar farm.

Mr BATT: I have another question for the Coordinator-General. Have any other projects started or are available for the Bundaberg SDA itself in that actual SDA area, not outside of it at the port?

Mr Broe: The Pacific Tugs uses part of the SDA to dispose of spoil. It is right beside the SDA.

Mr BATT: So it is outside the SDA?

Mr Broe: Industry do not really make a distinction between what is exactly in the SDA or beside it. They see it as a positive economic signal to encourage more development. Land can be made available and the port is very supportive. We have Pacific Tug and Knauf Plasterboard in there. We have a new road access being planned and built to the port to get around the residential area. Again, it is a long-term planning tool. People might have looked at the Gladstone SDA in the late 1990s and said, 'This is a failure.' It was declared in 1993. Curtis Island was acquired by the CG and went into that SDA in 2008 and it allowed the LNG industry to happen.

Townsville SDA is also taking off, as is Bromelton. We are happy with where it is. No-one is saying, 'Undeclare it. It is not happening.' It will take time, but I am sure it will happen. We do not just go around declaring SDAs at a whim. We get far more applications and requests for SDAs than go in. They have to be supported and there has to be a case for them. There is a case here and we think the signs are positive.

Mr BATT: Coordinator-General, the government is investing nearly \$13 million into the Gladstone SDA. Will you advise whether there are any state capital investment plans for the Bundaberg SDA? If so, when that money will be allocated?

Mr Broe: From what I know, there is already \$20 million invested in the gas pipeline and DTMR has an allocation to improve and upgrade the road access to the port. Straightaway, there is two that I am aware of. I would have to check if there is more across the other government departments. In any SDA the key is to get the infrastructure in place early—gas, power, water and the right road network—and then industry see that that is a catalyst and they will come. I am not saying 'build it and they will come', but if we do not build it and do not provide it then they definitely will not come. They will go somewhere else or the industry will not happen at all. That gives Bundaberg a fair chance.

Mr POWELL: Still focusing on SDAs and Budget Paper No. 3 at page 108, given that the Cairns South SDA was announced over two years ago, how much capital investment has the government budgeted this financial year for that project?

Mr Broe: We are working closely with Economic Development Queensland on the budget allocation to acquire land in the SDA. There has already been some good progress on one site in particular in the SDA. We are close to having a development scheme out for public consultation, and are working very closely with MSF to look at a stage 2 down by the mill that would allow them to expand and get into co-generation and new industries that they want to get into. I do not think you can judge the SDA by how much capital investment there is. It is about protecting the land for the future and then working with industry to make sure the industry comes along and knows it is there. The Cairns South SDA was fundamentally declared because of a predicted shortfall of industrial land of this nature in Cairns of 130 hectares. There simply is not the type of land needed for a regional scale industrial development that can operate 24/7 in this area.

Mr POWELL: Did you say there is not the need for this?

Mr Broe: I am saying that there is a need for it. The land was not available. There was a 130-hectare shortage of land. The type of land simply is not available in the future. For Cairns to diversify its economy and move into the types of jobs we are targeting here, such as advanced manufacturing and many of the industries in the department's road maps, we need to provide this land—

Mr POWELL: On that basis, when will that development scheme to which you refer be completed?

Mr Broe: We hope that the development scheme will be out for consultation in the next few weeks, and also consulting on stage 2 down by the mill, that is very strongly supported by council.

Mr POWELL: Nothing will be allocated until that development scheme is finalised?

Mr Broe: It is not for me to say how much the government will allocate. We are doing the fundamentals. When you declare an SDA you then produce a development scheme, which sets the rules for how industry makes applications. We protect the land and then we work with industry if they want to submit applications once a development scheme is in place.

CHAIR: We will move to government questions.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements and to your opening remarks. Are you aware of any alternative plans that might risk the development of a hydrogen industry in Queensland?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for his interest. I know that he has a keen interest in the development of Queensland's hydrogen industry. Our budget this year and the allocation of funding to my department are about one thing: creating and sustaining Queensland jobs. We are backing Queensland jobs with an investment in the development of world-class clean energy industries like hydrogen, with the potential to create thousands of jobs for Queenslanders including in regional parts of our state such as Gladstone, but the Queensland LNP's push for the development of nuclear energy in Queensland puts all of that at risk.

On 18 June the federal industry minister, someone who should be supporting the development of a renewable hydrogen industry, was asked about her support for nuclear energy. She said on Sky News on 18 June—

I don't have an issue with it being considered.

It is LNP policy to go nuclear, because the LNP passed a policy motion at its state convention last year calling on the federal government to consider the feasibility of nuclear powered energy generation in Australia. On television, the federal industry minister gave it a green light. Last month, Commonwealth energy minister Angus Taylor said that the government would be 'more than willing to consider' nuclear power. Senator James McGrath and the federal member for Hinkler, Keith Pitt, are not inexperienced members of parliament. James McGrath is a senior member of the LNP and a senior senator. They are not doing this without the implicit or explicit support of the Prime Minister. It cannot happen. It cannot be that for two months they have been pushing the nuclear barrow in Queensland—

Mr MICKELBERG: Point of order under standing order 118 on relevance. I know that the minister has very few infrastructure projects to talk about in his portfolio, but I am not sure how hypothetical—

CHAIR: I do not need your opinion, member for Buderim. We are only two minutes into the answer.

Mr MICKELBERG: Two minutes of waffle.

CHAIR: I will caution you on the use of such language. I ask the minister to continue with his answer.

Mr DICK: The member for Buderim might want to run a protection racket for the LNP's nuclear plan for Queensland, but I will not be silenced. I will stand up to Scott Morrison and all of his colleagues in the state LNP, including the member for Bundaberg, who will not say no.

Mr MICKELBERG: What are you the minister for?

Mr DICK: I am the minister for renewable hydrogen. A dagger to the heart of renewable hydrogen is nuclear power. Nuclear power will destabilise investment into energy in Queensland. It will destabilise Queensland's world-class reputation for clean and green agricultural production, which I would have thought members of the LNP would be trying to protect as a market advantage for primary producers in Queensland. It is a dagger to the heart of consistent industry development in this state.

The truth of the matter is: when will the LNP say no to nuclear? It is not complex. There is a law in Queensland that prohibits the development of nuclear energy. This will undermine everything we are doing to create green hydrogen. I have just been in Korea. Who were the two great pull factors for the development of a green hydrogen industry in Queensland? It was Japan and South Korea. Japan have closed down nuclear power. They want to move out of coal. They want to produce carbon-neutral energy. The way they see their country doing that, through what they call the Hydrogen Society plan, is to develop green hydrogen.

We will be vigorous in our opposition to this. I call on members of the LNP to stand against this plan, which is being pushed at all levels of the party—from the Australian government all the way through to branches of the LNP. Correction: I was in Japan, not Korea. Korea will be next.

Ms PUGH: Thank you for your clarification. I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Minister, further to your opening remarks, what is your understanding of the risks to other industries, jobs and growth posed by nuclear energy?

Mr DICK: The first thing we have to deal with is the hoax being perpetrated by the LNP that nuclear power is a good thing for the economy. It simply is not. We know that nuclear power stations need massive subsidies to get going. On the face of it, we should not simply divert potentially billions of dollars that could be spent on more productive and more welcome investments—light rail, heavy rail, new roads and better infrastructure—that Queenslanders actually want. We do not need a dangerous, radioactive white elephant that will damage Queensland's international reputation. Japan is a salient example. We know what happens when nuclear power gets out of control. We have an advanced economy. We have so many opportunities for our state. I have talked about those industries previously.

When Fukushima happened, the tsunami damaged and shut down the reactor cooling system and the cores melted within 72 hours. One thousand workers died—1,000 workers. That is the risk facing our state. Radiation showed up in local milk and vegetables. It appeared in Tokyo's drinking water. Radioactive materials continued to leak into the Pacific Ocean. Eleven of Japan's 50 nuclear reactors were immediately closed after the disaster. That reduced the country's energy generation by 40 per cent. We have to be strong against this. We have to support the sunrise industries that I talked about in my opening statement, including green hydrogen.

We are leading the nation. We are the first state with a hydrogen industry development plan and the federal government itself needs to get on board. They have commissioned Dr Alan Finkel, the Chief Scientist of Australia, to develop the national strategy. Let us not undermine his work, which members of the federal coalition are doing—members of the federal parliament are doing. Let us not undermine Alan Finkel's work. Let us lead the Asia-Pacific region. We want to be the hydrogen exporter of choice for Queensland. We are very keen and I hope we can support the development of that new solar farm in Bundaberg. That is what we should be doing—that is, leading the way with renewables—and we will continue to be supporting that, not a proposal that would wreck the very thing that the member for Bundaberg was asking about earlier in the hearing.

Mr MADDEN: I refer to page 5 of the Service Delivery Statements that mentions the government's work to support new industries in advancing manufacturing and robotics. Can the minister provide further details as to how he and his department are advancing these priorities?

Mr DICK: I am pleased to confirm to the committee that our government will invest \$7.71 million over the next four years to establish Queensland's first robotics manufacturing hub to create and support more jobs in Queensland. This is a great project that will allow Queensland industry and research institutions to build the advanced capability that will enable manufacturers to be more competitive, bring manufacturing jobs back to Australia and generate more jobs at home. The ARM hub—the advanced robotics manufacturing hub—will provide practical production and manufacturing advice in a real-life factory environment, enabling Queensland manufacturers to learn cutting-edge robotic technologies and techniques and develop industry skill and expertise to apply to their own businesses. The ARM hub will be developed in partnership with the Queensland University of Technology, one of the leading universities in Australia when it comes to robotics which honourable members might be aware of, and the global creative studio Urban Art Projects, or UAP.

All Queensland manufacturers will benefit. This is an important point that I want to make to the member for Ipswich West, who represents a very broad and diverse part of the south-east, and also other members of the committee from regional Queensland. This is not just for the south-east. This will allow manufacturers from across Queensland to access the hub across sectors as diverse as aerospace, biomedical, beef and food processing, defence, mining equipment technology and services, rail manufacturing and so on. Regional manufacturers will have the opportunity to access these services

through the Queensland government's manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton and at defence hubs in Townsville and Ipswich. Importantly, the hub will attract more than \$10 million in additional investment from QUT, UAP and other partners to bring the total investment, as I have said, to \$18 million.

Some people are concerned about robots, but the experience at UAP demonstrates that for every robot or robotic line or system they put in they generate five new jobs. That means that they are attracting jobs and onshoring manufacturing jobs to Queensland, not offshoring them, and I think that is very important. I want to acknowledge the founders and directors of UAP—two brothers, Matt and Dan Tobin. They are an amazing Queensland company that are producing world-class public art which is being installed in places like the W Hotel in Brisbane, the facade to the Wintergarden shopping centre in the Queen Street Mall and also around the world. I am very pleased that they have expanded their footprint. Not only are they employing more people here; they are expanding internationally. They are expanding into Shanghai and they have just bought a company in New York.

I am very pleased to say to the committee that the Oscar, the award for the Academy Awards, will be produced by UAP as a consequence of that company they have just purchased in the United States. How great for Queensland. When it comes to robotics and robotics and manufacturing, Queensland has won the Oscar!

CHAIR: Well said.

Ms PUGH: Minister, I refer to page 7 of the SDS with reference to the Coordinator-General's role in assessing the environmental impact statements—

Opposition members interjected.

Ms PUGH: Are you right there?

CHAIR: Hang on. Members, there has been a bit of chatter coming from my left over the past few questions. I point out that under standing order 251 there are requirements regarding noise or disturbance or interruption. I will ask the member for Mount Ommaney to resume.

Ms PUGH: Thank you. With regard to the environmental impact statement, can the minister update us on the status of coordinated projects that require Commonwealth environmental approvals, particularly the Six Mile Creek Dam upgrade and the Cairns shipping improvement project?

Mr DICK: I am happy to report to the committee that in May 2019 the Coordinator-General approved the \$100 million Six Mile Creek Dam Safety Upgrade project. This project will improve dam safety and ensure long-term local and regional water supply while also supporting the ongoing recreational use of Lake Macdonald. The member for Glass House is well aware of this project because earlier this year he expressed his concern that the Queensland government was not going fast enough, as did the member for Nicklin. I quote the member for Glass House in the *Sunshine Coast Daily* earlier this year when he said—

This dam is being upgraded to protect the Sunshine Coast from future flooding and every year of delay raises the threat our communities face ...

Exactly right, member for Glass House, but the good thing is you, too, can help. Under the law, this particular project requires Commonwealth approval and there is a time line that decisions must be made within. The Commonwealth LNP Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Sussan Ley, is the minister responsible. I am advised that under the law the minister had until 1 July this year to make a decision on the project under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. That decision is now overdue. The clock is ticking on the project, and it is the LNP's fault. I call on the member for Glass House and the member for Nicklin to act with some consistency and start attacking the federal government for the delays in this project with the same vigour that they have attacked the state Labor government. I ask them to stand up for their community and contact Minister Ley, who is a member of their party. Let us get the approvals sorted.

That is not the only problem we have seen with federal government delays. Let us take the Cairns Shipping Development Project which the Coordinator-General approved in February 2018. There is over \$120 million in investment proposed there, tripling the number of passenger days spent in Cairns each year due to cruise ship tourism—that is, an increase of 225,000 passenger days each year by 2031 and potentially an \$850 million boost to Far North Queensland tourism. It is creating more than 165 direct full-time-equivalent jobs—and I am happy to talk about this because honourable members criticised me for not talking about infrastructure—and creating more than 195 direct full-time jobs on

average during construction, including professional services and engineering jobs to upgrade wharves at the port of Cairns. This is another project that is languishing on a Commonwealth minister's desk—languishing on the minister's desk in the Morrison government.

In that particular case, Commonwealth approval for the project under the EPBC Act was not received until late October 2018, some eight months after the Coordinator-General's approval. We have been doing the hard work to make up lost time due to the Commonwealth's delays and we want to see these projects accelerated, and on and on it goes. Then there is the \$1 billion Olive Downs project approved by the Coordinator-General on 13 May 2019. Of all projects you would think the LNP would get their act together and deliver on that project. Construction could commence in late 2019, with first coal to be delivered in 2020, subject to the project receiving approval from the Commonwealth environment minister.

The Commonwealth environment minister was required under the EPBC Act to make a decision on the project by 26 June 2019 but stopped the clock. This is a \$1 billion coalmine with 500 construction jobs, 1,000 operational jobs and decades of coal production being stopped because the LNP cannot do its job. They say constantly, 'How good is Queensland.' They need to get their act together, get the approval done so that those jobs can start flowing through the Olive Downs project to regional Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: I refer to page 8 of the Service Delivery Statements and the Coordinator-General's role in administering the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act. Can the minister update the committee on any improvements in this area?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Ipswich West. Chair, can I just get clarity on how long until this session of questions—

CHAIR: I would say approximately three minutes would suit us ideally.

Mr DICK: Thanks very much. I am very pleased to update the committee on the Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities Act 2017—the SSRC Act. For too long Queenslanders in resource communities were missing out on the benefits that mining could bring to communities. They saw the previous government trying to roll out the failed Royalties for the Regions program. The Auditor-General absolutely tore that program apart. It was an LNP boondoggle of the highest order.

The state LNP did not deal with the fundamental issue, which was fly-in fly-out workers. The SSRC Act, passed by the parliament, an initiative of our Labor government in the last term, ensures that residents of communities near large resource projects benefit from the construction and operation of these projects. Under that act, large resource projects are those resource projects for which an environmental impact statement is required or that hold a site-specific environmental authority and have more than 100 workers. A nearby regional community is one that is within a 125-kilometre radius of a large resource project and has a population of more than 200 residents. The Coordinator-General can also define and designate other communities for the purposes of the act.

As part of the ongoing review, an analysis of the operation of the act, today I am pleased to announce that more towns and communities will benefit from the provisions of the SSRC Act. In particular, the Coordinator-General has made declarations for Baralaba North Mine, the Barbara Project, the Bauxite Hills Mine—the hills mine—the Century Zinc mine, the Cook Colliery, the Mount Colin Mine, the Mungana Mine and the Olive Downs mine. This means that these projects will be prohibited from employing a 100 per cent FIFO workforce. It also means that another 59 regional communities will be protected under the antidiscrimination provisions in the act relating to the recruitment and termination of workers.

This is the third update to the Coordinator-General's published list of large resource projects, with the act now applying to 69 large resource projects and 295 different nearby regional communities. Members should note that the Coordinator-General has used his discretionary powers under the act to also declare Mount Colin Mine and the Barbara Project in Queensland's north-west region, which would not otherwise qualify because both of those projects are likely to have fewer than 100 workers. However, the Coordinator-General formed the view—and I support him in forming that view—that their inclusion is important to ensure that the residents of Mount Isa and Cloncurry can benefit from the mine's operation.

For the benefit of the committee, those communities for the Baralaba North Mine are Banana, Baralaba, Bauhinia, Biloela, Blackwater, Bluff, Bouldercombe, Duinga, Glendale, Gracemere, Mount Morgan, Moura, Rockhampton, Thangool, Theodore and Woorabinda. For the Barbara Project, the communities are Cloncurry and Mount Isa. For the Bauxite Hills Mine, the communities are Bamaga,

Injinoo, Mapoon, Napranum, New Mapoon, Seisia, Umagico and Weipa. For the Century Zinc mine, the community is Doomadgee. I am so pleased that that Indigenous communities are being included. For the Cook Colliery, the communities are Baralaba, Blackwater, Bluff, Capella, Duaringa, Emerald, Middlemount, Rolleston, Springsure, Tieri, Woorabinda and Yamala. For the Mount Colin Mine, the communities are Cloncurry and Mount Isa. For the Mungana Mine, including the King Vol Mine, the communities are Atherton, Chillagoe, Dimbulah, Herberton, Mareeba, Mareeba South, Mount Garnet, Tinaroo, Tolga, Tolga West and Walkamin. For the Olive Downs mine, the communities are Armstrong Beach, Carmila, Coppabella, Capella, Clermont, Dysart, Eton, Finch Hatton, Glenden, Middlemount, Mirani, Moranbah, Nebo, Sarina, St Lawrence and Tieri.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We will go to some questions from the other side.

Mr POWELL: The minister seems to forget that it was the Labor government that approved a 100 per cent FIFO mine, not an LNP government. My questions are again around state development areas. I refer to the \$12.329 million allocated for state development area acquisitions, which appear in Budget Paper No. 3 at page 108. Coordinator-General, can you advise where this money will be spent and, if it has been allocated to multiple locations, how much each location will receive?

Mr Broe: Thank you for the question. That amount is spread across two state development areas. It is allocated to Gladstone and Townsville. The bulk of the money is for one acquisition in Townsville, which is a major strategic development. I acquired land from a proponent who had been sitting on that land for quite some time. That is 350 hectares they are now opening up for development. That payment has not been made yet, quite simply because we have not received a compensation bid. I cannot make an advance payment until the previous owner submits a claim for compensation under the Acquisition of Land Act.

The second smaller amount is in Gladstone, allocated to two properties, one of which I have settled. There was a good saving for the government there, because I gave some land as part of the deal that the government did not need. That saved money. The second is an acquisition that is still ongoing and we are negotiating compensation with that former owner.

Mr POWELL: Can you specify the amounts?

Mr Broe: I would prefer not to specify them here for each, but I can break it down and give it to you separately. Roughly, for the Townsville one the allocation is \$12.3 million and the remainder is for the two in Gladstone.

Mr POWELL: Acting Director-General, I refer to the answer to question on notice No. 17 about conference workshop catering and other hospitality expenses for 2018-19. Of the \$1.47 million spent, how much was on alcohol?

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, that is tending towards an imputation. I am letting that one through, but I notice—

Mr POWELL: Imputation?

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, you pulled out one aspect of this with an imputation on it. I am going to let this one through, but I am going to ask the acting director-general to answer that in a fulsome way, whichever she wishes to do.

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. Entertainment expenditure is only incurred for official functions involving government, business and industry or community representatives with the objective of industry development and investment attraction. The department's finance system is based on a chart of accounts prescribed by Queensland Treasury that lists all available general ledger accounts used to record expenses. The chart of accounts does not have an account for alcohol, which means that the department's spend on alcohol specifically cannot be easily identified without an in-depth manual investigation of every record supporting transactions coded to entertainment general ledger accounts. Entertainment is identified as providing an employee or associates with food and/or drinks. I can confirm that any expenditure would have been on food as well as drinks.

Mr POWELL: What was the amount that was spent on food and drink?

Ms Power: The total entertainment amount in 2018-19 was \$43,209, but that includes food.

Mr POWELL: Mr Chair, I am just a little bit interested. Yesterday TIQ could specifically define how much was spent on alcohol, yet we cannot get that out of State Development. Is there any specific reason that is the case?

CHAIR: Are you making that as a comment or a question?

Mr POWELL: That is a question.

CHAIR: Could you repeat your question in a form that the acting director-general—

Mr POWELL: I take on board the advice that the acting director-general has provided about drilling down into specifics, but I find it interesting that another agency, TIQ, can do so.

CHAIR: You are making a statement. What is your question?

Mr POWELL: Would the acting director-general like to take that question on notice to be able to provide that information?

CHAIR: Can you clarify what the question is?

Mr POWELL: What is the amount spent on alcohol?

Ms Power: We are unable to separate alcohol from entertainment.

CHAIR: We have touched on that. I believe that we have heard that one. You were starting to repeat yourself.

Mr POWELL: Because were you asking me to, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Do you have another question?

Mr POWELL: I do.

CHAIR: I am very interested.

Mr POWELL: Acting Director-General, I refer to the manufacturing hub service area highlight on page 5 of the SDS. Can you please advise whether each hub located in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton has commenced operations?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. We have staff appointed to all of the manufacturing hubs. The manufacturing hubs themselves as sites will be open later this year. So the work is actually happening.

Mr POWELL: How many staff at each hub and are there any positions yet to be filled?

Ms Power: All nine staff have been engaged and the hubs have commenced operations.

Mr POWELL: Nine staff, three in each hub, all engaged?

Ms Power: Yes.

Mr POWELL: Again on that same aspect of page 5 of the SDS and the manufacturing hubs service area, how much will each hub annually spend on employee salaries, lease arrangements and other administrative expenses?

Ms Power: I will have to come back to you on that detailed breakdown before the end of the hearing.

CHAIR: To clarify, we will have that back either by the end of the session or as a question on notice. We are getting a few of these coming along. We will touch on that in a moment.

Mr WEIR: I refer to the manufacturing hubs service area highlight on page 5 of the SDS. What portion of the \$30 million announced will go directly to regional manufacturers in the form of business development programs, skills and equipment?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. The budgets for the manufacturing hubs are being worked up. It is over a three-year period, but the intention is certainly to develop regional manufacturing capability and to support regional business to grow their manufacturing and convert themselves into advanced manufacturing capabilities. Regional manufacturing is very diverse. It ranges from food processing and beef processing to metal manufacturing and biofutures, from aerospace and defence to rail manufacturing and craft brewing. The department's 10-year Advanced Manufacturing Road Map and Action Plan has set the forward agenda for the focus on supporting the growth of regional manufacturing.

Mr WEIR: Do we have any idea how much of the \$30 million will go to regional manufacturing? Do we have a figure?

Ms Power: All of it will go to supporting the development of regional manufacturing capability. As far as the percentage that will go to individual manufacturers in regions, I am unable to say at this point.

Mr POWELL: I refer to the department's priority to enhance key investment attraction as referred to on SDS page 3. I note that the Scottish multinational brewing company BrewDog that was given a taxpayer funded grant to compete with Queensland businesses has reportedly halved its production capacity investment. Acknowledging the minister's public statement that a halving of investment does not require any of the grant to be paid back, can you please detail exactly what performance milestones this project has?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. BrewDog is constructing its first Australian craft brewery in Brisbane, as you know, on the river at Murarrie and that is with the support from the Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund. The department has been advised that the facility will still commence operations in late 2019 and that BrewDog has taken a decision to start with a flexible four-vessel 25 hectolitre system which is scalable to the same volume as a two-vessel 50 hectolitre system which I think was what was probably published early on. Their proposal to do it in that way allows for greater flexibility in concurrently producing several different brews. The incentives that have been provided to BrewDog are commercial-in-confidence and are, in part, scalable in accordance with the production capacity and the jobs created. At full capacity, BrewDog plans to invest approximately \$30 million and employ approximately 150 people over the next five years. The department's incentives are directly related to the achievement of those performance outcomes.

Mr POWELL: That figure of 150, has that been revised down based on the change in the production capacity investment?

Ms Power: I will take advice on that, but not to my knowledge. It is scalable. Their incentive is directly related to the number of people they employ.

Mr POWELL: Therefore is there a number of jobs that are delivered required before the taxpayer money would be paid back?

Ms Power: I cannot speak to the actual provisions of the contract because they are commercial-in-confidence but I can say that the contract has very strict conditions around the delivery of any sort of incentive being determined by the delivery of performance conditions.

Mr POWELL: If the performance metrics are commercial-in-confidence how can Queenslanders have confidence that the taxpayer funded grants are actually value for money?

CHAIR: You know I am going to ask you to rephrase that in a way that does not offend standing orders.

Mr POWELL: How can you reassure Queenslanders that the investment was well made?

Ms Power: I can say the process for all industry attraction grants takes account of a very deliberate due diligence and economic assessment. The contracts are developed with very significant and very deliberate outcomes tied to milestones. It is very much a contract managed process.

Mr POWELL: If those milestones are not achieved the money is paid back?

Ms Power: It would depend on the conditions of the contract and in this case I cannot say. As a general rule, money is paid after the achievement of a contract milestone.

Mr MICKELBERG: I refer to the department's industry development key priority on SDS page 3. Action 1 from the department's Craft Brewing Strategy released last year was to investigate establishing a brewlab facility in Queensland by 2020. With less than six months until 2020, can you please advise whether that facility has been established?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. The Queensland government Craft Brewing Strategy includes nine targeted practical actions. A brewlab facility will be established to provide an accessible space for brewers to develop and test innovative products without impacting on their existing production facilities. Brewlab will complement skills development initiatives to meet the sector's growing need for qualified brewers to satisfy the increasing demand for craft beer and the rate of new craft breweries across the state. It is on track for delivery. We have no reason to assume it will not be delivered.

Mr MICKELBERG: By 2020?

Ms Power: By 2020.

Mr MICKELBERG: Was a business case completed and, if so, will it be publicly released?

Ms Power: I will take some advice on the business case, but any support that government gives to any industry is based on either a thorough assessment of a proposal that has come in for grant funding or a business case for investments and that is taken to a cross-government investment panel for a decision. I have just been told that a business case is in progress. A business case will be complete before the brewlab is activated.

Mr MICKELBERG: Will it be publicly released?

Ms Power: We are going to deliver the brewlab.

Mr DICK: We are going to deliver the brewlab. You either want one or you don't.

Mr MICKELBERG: I will move on to my next question. Action 7 from the Craft Brewing Strategy states that the government would improve the regulatory environment for craft brewers. Can you explain how increasing the emergency services levy tenfold for craft brewers is an improvement in regulation?

Ms PUGH: Point of order, Chair. Should that question not be directed to the minister for QFES, that being his portfolio?

Mr MICKELBERG: We are talking about industry development.

CHAIR: We are talking about the regulatory environment, which I think does come under this portfolio. I think it is a valid point. I will allow the acting director-general to answer that.

Ms Power: Thank you, Chair, for the clarification. The government backs small business and the government recognises that enterprises such as breweries harness exceptional creative talents and provide jobs. In Queensland we have about 100 independent breweries, supporting more than 1,700 jobs. Local councils are conducting audits to ensure that the emergency management levy is being applied correctly. I am advised that the audit is revealing that some independent breweries had been charged the wrong levy. I am also advised that the EML ensures that businesses, including those that produce alcohol, have an A-class response from emergency services should there be a fire or a similar emergency. In the first instance, affected businesses should contact their local council to ensure that they have been correctly classified. Next, they should visit the EML unit on the QFES website or, I am told, they should call 36353041. I am advised that QFES will work with the businesses on a case-by-case basis.

Mr MICKELBERG: Did the department raise any concerns with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in relation to the increased emergency services levy and the effect on craft brewers?

Ms Power: I am not aware of the department raising any issues with QFES.

Mr MICKELBERG: Has the department done any modelling in relation to the impact of that increase?

Ms Power: The department has not done modelling, no.

CHAIR: We will go to the crossbench and the member for Noosa.

Ms BOLTON: I refer to page 5 of the Service Delivery Statements regarding Building our Regions. Will the minister please explain why Noosa council is ineligible to participate in this program, given that Noosa is similar in size and structure to many councils that are eligible, does not have the resources of larger councils and is also excluded from funding under Works for Queensland, for which we continue to be unsuccessful in having the eligibility criteria reviewed?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Noosa for asking me a question. You are the first member of this committee and, indeed, you are not even a member of the committee—

Mr POWELL: They asked you questions.

Mr DICK: Non-government member; thank you for the clarification, member for Glass House. I am grateful that someone on that side of the table has asked me a question.

Historically, Building our Regions has not been about South-East Queensland. I heard your question and I understand the challenges of councils such as Noosa. Admittedly, it was a decision made by that community to become a small council and separate themselves from the Sunshine Coast Regional Council. It is always a concern that, because of their size, they will not have the capacity and the rate base of a larger council to deliver projects for their community.

To be honest with the member for Noosa, I do not necessarily think those rules will change, because the program is focused on regional Queensland outside of the south-east. Broadly, when you look at our South East Queensland Regional Plan, for example—and I have worked with Mayor Tony Wellington on the regional planning group—it includes Noosa and the Sunshine Coast pretty much as the northernmost councils in South-East Queensland. However, there are other programs where the Noosa council is eligible and we would encourage it to support that.

As an election commitment, as the honourable member may know, through the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund we did invest in the Sunshine Coast broadband cable initiative. That will benefit residents of Noosa. That will create for the first time another data gateway into Australia, providing more strength and resilience to the data system in our country. We made a commitment in the election to do that.

If there are any specific proposals that the council has, I would encourage it, either through your work, member for Noosa, or directly, to contact either me or the department. We will see if they fit into a program. We will see if they can be supported. Committing money to regional and small rural communities is very important. Our flagship program is designed to support those communities.

Ms BOLTON: Chair, can I ask one more quick question?

CHAIR: Yes, but you will be taking a question off a fellow crossbencher.

Ms BOLTON: No, I will not do that. I will pass it along, because I do not want them to miss out.

Mr DICK: I am sorry. That was a long answer.

Mr BERKMAN: Minister, you would be aware of the decision of the Office of the Information Commissioner late last year that compelled the release of the Toondah Harbour project development agreement with Walker Group and that the government has taken legal action to prevent the release of that project development agreement. How much is the government spending to challenge the decision of the OIC and to prevent the release of that project development agreement for the Toondah Harbour development?

Mr DICK: I do not know the answer to that question. However, we need integrity around our information system. We need to ensure that it does have integrity and that there is a system. A system has parameters, as you as a lawyer know. Therefore, it is important that we ensure robustness around it. You will have a different view. I know that you do not support Toondah Harbour and a lot of people do not support it, but a lot of people on the bayside do support it.

It is a proponent that came to government, firstly through the LNP government. Information that is given in confidence, again as you as a lawyer would know, should be kept in confidence. That is how government has to work on projects. Not everyone will accept that. However, that is the way to ensure that project proponents at least are considered fairly by government and that there is a fair exchange of confidential information. It does not necessarily mean that a project will go ahead, but we will continue to act in a way that is robust but also allows proponents to invest in Queensland within an established framework, including the management of information exchange between government and other parties.

Mr BERKMAN: Can the question about the amount of legal costs be taken on notice, Minister?

CHAIR: Wait a moment, member for Maiwar. I will ask the minister to respond very quickly before we go to the member for Mirani.

Mr DICK: The truth is that the matter is still on appeal, so the full legal cost is not known by the department until the conclusion of that matter.

Mr BERKMAN: How much has been spent? That is certainly a pertinent question at this point.

Mr DICK: We would have to aggregate that information. We would not have a number available to date, member for Maiwar.

Mr BERKMAN: Which makes it the perfect question to take on notice, surely, Chair?

CHAIR: Do you want that one taken on notice?

Mr BERKMAN: Absolutely.

Mr DICK: I have given the member for Maiwar an answer. There are other ways to ask questions of me in the parliamentary system, if he wants to ask me.

Mr BERKMAN: Heaven forbid we should expect answers at estimates!

CHAIR: Member for Maiwar, I think you have the answer that you are going to get.

Mr DICK: On the basis that I am not going to waste more taxpayers' money to put together a cost figure on a process that has not yet finished, the member for Maiwar is always free to ask me a question on notice in the parliament.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, could you please outline the plans to secure permanent work and workforces for residents such as around the Clarke Creek renewable wind farm project? Would the government consider replicating the rules preventing 100 per cent FIFO in those situations, to make sure that local regions get a go at those renewables projects?

Mr DICK: Earlier in the day I answered a question about Strong and Sustainable Resource Communities and the decision of the Coordinator-General to include other communities into the SSRC framework for a number of resource projects. You might be interested in some of those. Some of those will fall within your electorate. That strengthens the anti-100 per cent FIFO provisions there. It is not currently government policy in relation to renewables projects to put those within the framework of the SSRC. I will be honest with you that it is not a policy that the government is seeking to pursue at this time.

CHAIR: We will go to the member for Mount Ommaney.

Ms PUGH: Minister, I refer to page 3 of the SDS, which mentions the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund. Can you please advise how the fund is supporting growth in regional Queensland, particularly in relation to the sugar industry?

Mr DICK: I am pleased to answer that question. There has been some uncertainty around the continuation of a number of mills, and their financial viability has been brought into question. Some of them have faced financial difficulty, including Mackay Sugar. As the member for Mount Ommaney may know, in the state budget the Treasurer announced that the government would commit funding towards securing an international investor to support Mackay Sugar. That will have a positive benefit, not just for the Mackay community but also for the Mossman mill, which is operated by Mackay Sugar. That is important because Mackay Sugar's workforce reaches a maximum workforce of 800 people at the peak of the crush each year. There remained the question of Mossman mill's ongoing viability. The international investor who was interested in supporting Mackay Sugar wanted to see that mill transferred to local grower ownership.

In December last year officials of my department secured agreement with growers for a support package of up to \$25 million to help support the establishment of an innovative biorefinery that would help underpin the long-term future of Mossman Mill. This is trying to transition mills away from crushing and producing sugar to higher value products and supporting the development of our bioeconomy in Queensland.

The whole project hinged on Commonwealth support. In particular, the federal member for Leichhardt, Warren Entsch, promised that there would be \$20 million to keep the mill going while the biorefinery was being developed. We were clear and up-front with the grower organisation which became the grower owner of the company that we would support the transition of the mill into a higher value future. That is where the government wanted to invest to support those growers. They were on board with that principally because we have a 10-year road map and action plan for biofutures.

The federal government said that they would support the ongoing operation of the mill until that occurred. The member for Leichhardt promised prior to the federal election, in my view, that that would happen. That was a promise he made during the election. I think it was a promise made to help secure his re-election. In fact, Mr Entsch told the *Cairns Post* on 15 February this year—

There had been an issue with the money—the funding stream it came from meant it could not be used for day-to-day operations like wages, which the farming co-operative Far Northern Milling needed—but that had since been fixed.

Mr Entsch further stated—

We found a more flexible funding bucket, of exactly the same amount, to allow them to do what they need to do.

The problem was that once the election was over Warren Entsch tried to back out of his deal and back out of his promise to the people of the Tablelands. In May of this year I learnt that the Commonwealth had reneged on the deal, tabling a statutory instrument in the Commonwealth parliament for funding, which stated—

The program provides funding to Far Northern Milling Pty Ltd ... to support the capital upgrade and maintenance of the Mossman Mill.

There was nothing about operational funding. That put the whole deal at risk, not just for Mossman Mill but the future of Mackay Sugar.

I commend the member for Cook, Cynthia Lui, for her work because she was relentless in applying pressure to the Morrison government to honour their promise. I have to say that I did not hear anything from the state LNP about supporting one of the most important agricultural industries in Queensland—the sugar industry.

We applied pressure to the federal government because jobs are our No. 1 priority. Last month it paid off. We finally heard that the Commonwealth, the Morrison government, would cave and that they agreed to provide \$5 million in operational funding. Now it is up to the mill. We want to support those growers. They have a bold vision for the future of milling on the Tablelands, including a very good plan, I believe, for diversification. It is challenging, but they have the support now of both levels of government—from the federal government to keep the mill operating and from our government to transition into a brighter future we hope.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. I refer to page 3 of the Service Delivery Statements and the government's good work to encourage businesses to expand in Queensland, and I ask: can the minister advise the committee as to the progress on attracting the Qantas flight training centre to Queensland?

Mr DICK: It has been a great achievement to secure that flight training centre for Toowoomba and also the recent announcement that Queensland has secured the intention and commitment of Qantas to establish a second flight training academy in Queensland in Mackay. It was a very significant process. More than 60 regional cities put forward a proposal across Australia—across effectively every state and territory, I think excluding Tasmania perhaps. Nine cities and towns were short-listed.

Our government worked relentlessly on this project from its announcement by Qantas in February 2018. In June 2018 we saw the release of a short list which contained Toowoomba and Mackay. The opposition in the state could not help themselves however and went to Toowoomba and claimed, entirely without any substance and foundation, that the government was working to support Mackay. It was regrettable that the member for Glass House, the member for Toowoomba North and the member for Condamine—although I will cut the member for Condamine some slack as I think he was led astray by his colleagues; maybe he was right behind it as it sounds like he was full throated in his support—attacked the government saying we were supporting Mackay over Toowoomba. The member for Mackay wanted it there, but that is her job.

I am so pleased that their campaign was a complete fizzer. Seriously, what would Qantas have made of that stunt—and that was all it was? They picked Mackay. What would the consequences have been for Qantas? Anyway, we continued to work hard and closely with Qantas and we saw last month that Qantas had chosen Mackay.

It has not been a good year when it comes to the Rugby League State of Origin, but in the state of origin of flight training academies from Qantas we have won both rounds and the series goes to Queensland. This also demonstrates that our state has the capacity to be the aviation training hub and centre for the Asia-Pacific.

We have many companies working in the aviation and aerospace area, including Qantas and Boeing and other companies working in the aerospace area generally—Northrop Grumman, Virgin and Alliance Airlines, the third biggest airline in Australia. Our government was pleased to support them through our Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund to expand into Rockhampton. More than 40 jobs will roll out over the next few years up there. That means a kid growing up in Central Queensland or Rockhampton can aspire to be a pilot or a flight attendant or maintenance crew. They can grow up in Central Queensland, they can do their training there and they can potentially get a job in their own community. I think that is a great thing for regional Queensland.

CHAIR: The committee will now take a break and the hearing will resume at 2.30 pm with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of infrastructure and planning.

Proceedings suspended from 2.17 pm to 2.32 pm.

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of infrastructure and planning. Minister, if you wish, you can make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr DICK: For the benefit of the committee, I thought I might use this time to address some of those issues raised during the committee hearing to get some matters on the record rather than give you a detailed statement. If I go through those, it might be to everyone's benefit when it comes to time, rather than having to find time at the end of the hearing.

Firstly, there were questions asked about Economic Development Queensland and Cross River Rail planning. The question related to Boggo Road and other stations. Economic Development Queensland, I am advised, is one of the agencies being consulted by the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, along with the Brisbane City Council, on land use planning for the areas surrounding the proposed Cross River Rail stations. This includes Boggo Road, Dutton Park. This work is led by the

Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. The instrument for the land use planning at Boggo Road, Dutton Park, is yet to be determined. A priority development area is one option being considered by the responsible delivering agency.

I refer honourable members to what happened in the estimates committee hearing yesterday in the relevant committee where Mr Graeme Newton, who is the CEO of the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority, was asked about the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority's planning for the Boggo Road station by the shadow Treasurer and member for Everton, Tim Mander. The transcript of that hearing reveals the following—

Mr MANDER: Mr Newton, can you advise whether the proposed new Boggo Road station will be part of a new priority development area similar to the Albert Street station site?

Mr Newton: Is the Boggo Road station, the new underground station, the one to which you are referring?

Mr MANDER: Yes.

Mr Newton: Currently, the Boggo Road station is not part of a priority development area. It is adjacent to the Ecosciences Precinct. No decision has been made in relation to whether or not that would be a PDA.

That issue was canvassed yesterday in the hearings.

In relation to manufacturing hubs, I can advise that the following expenditure is budgeted over three years: \$4 million for salaries; \$231,000 for lease and car park expenditure; and \$350,000 for fit-out costs, and IT equipment and hardware. The balance of funds will be for industry development.

There were questions asked about the Bundaberg State Development Area. The member for Bundaberg asked about the Bundaberg solar farm, which was mentioned at last year's estimates. It has development approval, but the proponent is currently considering its options. This really brings home the point about the need for certainty. All this talk about nuclear power creates uncertainty. Honourable members may laugh, but why would investors spend billions of dollars across Queensland or money at Bundaberg if they are going to drop in a nuclear power plant? Let us just put it to bed. It is not hard. It is not complicated. Just say, 'We are against nuclear power.' If you do not take a definitive position on it, you surely must be acquiescing to it and supporting it.

I was asked questions about advertising. The honourable member asked a question about the cost of advertising, particularly in the *Australian*. I am happy to provide some information and some context. I understand that the total amount of advertising on behalf of the Queensland government for 2018-19 was \$26.44 million. This is a decrease of approximately \$9.76 million, or almost \$10 million, compared to the Newman government's expenditure in 2014-15 of approximately \$36.2 million. In fact, advertising placement expenditure in the last 12 months of the former Newman LNP government, in which of course the member for Glass House served as a cabinet minister, from March 2014 to February 2015 was \$44.92 million.

We know that in the state development portfolio Jeff Seeney spent \$640,000 to create his own *RegionsQ* magazine featuring photos of the then minister. I also confirm that Mr Seeney approved a \$300,000 advertising campaign to raise awareness of defence industries. By comparison, the placement in the *Australian* was quite modest. I understand that the cost was heavily discounted, at a total of \$77,000 but delivering over \$200,000 in benefits including half a tabloid page in the two defence reports—op-ed within the defence reports, approximately 700 to 800 words; half a tabloid page to appear in the research and defence report on 29 May—op-ed within the research and defence report, approximately 700 to 800 words, and extension to digital magazine in both publications; and half a tabloid page in the Pacific 2019 expo report which will happen later in the year—op-ed within the Pacific 2019 expo report and the Pacific 2019 report digital magazine extension.

This is the *Australian*. It does not have a huge readership in Queensland, but it is read by key decision-makers in Canberra and in the federal government and in defence industries. This was not *RegionsQ*. It was not a spam magazine that was being distributed across Queensland. The package, I can advise the committee, was fully approved by the GACC and I think it represents good value.

I also note that the Leader of the Opposition is sponsoring ads on Facebook attacking the waste industry and the waste levy. Is the opposition leader using her funding in the opposition office to fund these spam ads on Facebook? I note that she is promoting David Crisafulli, which is good. It appears that there is now a partnership between the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Broadwater, which seems to be an improvement. It says—

Deb Frecklington MP compensated David Crisafulli—Broadwater MP—to share this post. Branded content: let's create a partner with brands to promote products or services.

I table that. The question is: is the Leader of the Opposition using public money to promote that?

CHAIR: We will now go to questions.

Mr POWELL: Returning to the matter that we raised earlier in the first session, the questions are to the acting director-general. Notwithstanding the comments just made by the minister, this is with regard to the department's service summary for the declaration of further Cross River Rail PDAs on SDS page 44. I understand that the instrument is to be determined, and I understand that it appears from the minister's comments that the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority is driving the preparation of documents. In assisting the department and advising the minister of a potential PDA declaration has the department prepared any documents on the potential Boggo Road station?

Ms Power: As I am aware, the department has been consulted, as has the Brisbane City Council, around planning matters. We have not prepared any documents for Cross River Rail, but I will absolutely confirm that. That is a slightly different question, I think, from the earlier questions around documentation.

Mr POWELL: Just while you are clarifying that, as part of preparing anything—any maps or any draft boundaries and whether those boundaries extend north past Abingdon Street; they are the kinds of aspects we are trying to determine—what documents, what maps, have been prepared by your department in preparation for advising the minister of a possible priority development area declaration?

Ms Power: I can confirm that we have provided no advice to the minister in any way around that, but I will confirm with Economic Development Queensland as to any documentation that they may have prepared.

Mr POWELL: And when it was prepared, if that is possible, please, Acting Director-General.

Ms Power: Yes.

Mr POWELL: These questions are to the chief executive officer of Building Queensland. With regard to Building Queensland's responsibility for publishing business cases—SDS page 3—in what month was the detailed Cairns Convention Centre business case completed?

Mr Gould: Building Queensland, in accordance with the Building Queensland Act, led the development of the Cairns Convention Centre detailed business case in partnership with the Department of Housing and Public Works. The business case was completed and considered by the Building Queensland board in June this year. After endorsement of the business case, the business case was provided through the Department of Housing and Public Works to the government for consideration.

Mr POWELL: So it is currently sitting with the government for consideration?

Mr Gould: Building Queensland has completed the detailed business case for the Cairns Convention Centre project. That has been referred to the government through the Department of Housing and Public Works.

Mr POWELL: Does Building Queensland have any idea when that will be made public?

Mr Gould: Building Queensland's role in relation to the development and leading of detailed business cases, in partnership with relevant government agencies, relates to the business case development stage of the project. Once Building Queensland has completed the relevant business case and that has been referred to government, Building Queensland does not play any further role in relation to the consideration of the recommendations of the project. That is a matter for government. We do not participate in any decisions in relation to the funding decisions that may be attached to business case assessments.

Mr POWELL: Did the business case find the Cairns Convention Centre project to be economically viable?

Mr Gould: As indicated, Building Queensland led the development of the Cairns Convention Centre detailed business case. The business case was undertaken in accordance with Building Queensland's business case development framework, so it incorporated a detailed assessment of the technical elements of the project and the financial, commercial and economic viability of the project. The recommendations and findings were incorporated in the final business case, which has been provided to the government for consideration. That is a matter for the government's consideration in relation to considering the findings of the business case.

Mr POWELL: Just to clarify, whilst you have no further role I understand it is Building Queensland that will ultimately publish that document when it is given approval by the government to do so; is that correct?

Mr Gould: In relation to the obligations of Building Queensland under the Building Queensland Act, where we have led the development of a detailed business case we are required to provide a summary of the cost-benefit analysis outcome for that particular business case. We typically do that through publishing a summary of the business case, which also incorporates a summary of the findings of the cost-benefit analysis. The timing of when those publications are made available is: we wait until the government has had the opportunity to fully consider the recommendations of the detailed business case, at which point, in consultation with the relevant line agency, we publish the findings in accordance with the publication requirements in our act.

Mr POWELL: And that has not happened yet in this case?

Mr Gould: Not to date.

Mr POWELL: With regard to the Nullinga Dam business case, when was that completed by Building Queensland?

Mr Gould: Building Queensland led the development of the Nullinga Dam and the Mareeba-Dimbulah water supply scheme detailed business case in partnership with SunWater as the project proponent. The detailed business case was considered by the Building Queensland board and the recommendations and findings of the business case referred to government through SunWater in June this year.

Mr POWELL: Can you confirm what I understand was stated by Minister Lynham this morning; that is, that the business case found the project to be not economically viable? Apologies, it was one of Minister Lynham's departmental staff who made that statement.

Mr Gould: I have not had the opportunity to review the transcript from this morning's hearing.

Mr POWELL: Building Queensland has no idea when construction will start on either of those two projects in Far North Queensland?

CHAIR: I will let that one through. 'No idea'—there are some imputations there. I will let the CEO finish that answer, bearing in mind what he may or may not be able to say.

Mr Gould: As indicated in the previous response, both in relation to leading the detailed business case assessment for the Cairns Convention Centre project, the Nullinga Dam and the Mareeba-Dimbulah water supply scheme, Building Queensland's role is to lead and undertake those business case assessments in accordance with requirements under our act, and we do that in partnership with the relevant proponents. At the completion of those business cases, after the Building Queensland board has considered and endorsed the findings and recommendations of the business case, they are referred to the Queensland government for consideration through the relevant line agency. As indicated in my previous response, Building Queensland does not participate in any further consideration of the project from a funding perspective. In that sense, Building Queensland's role in relation to further stages of the development of the project would be a matter for government direction. Building Queensland's function is to undertake the business case assessments.

Mr POWELL: In what month was the Brisbane Live entertainment arena business case completed?

Mr Gould: Building Queensland led the development of the Brisbane Live arena Roma Street precinct detailed business case in partnership with the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority. The detailed business case findings and recommendations were considered by the Building Queensland board and referred to government for consideration through the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority in October 2018.

Mr POWELL: No direction has been given on any of those three projects to publish yet?

Mr Gould: There are direction powers under the Building Queensland Act. Building Queensland has not received a ministerial direction to release information in relation to those projects, notwithstanding we make available the findings and summary information in relation to business cases and cost-benefit summaries as required under our act provisions. To assist the member, the Building Queensland website includes information in relation to past business cases that have been completed by Building Queensland and indicates the time frame for which those business cases were completed.

Mr POWELL: Mr Gould, has a business case ever been withdrawn from a draft board pack upon request from a ministerial office?

Mr Gould: There is a direction power under the Building Queensland Act. Building Queensland has not received a ministerial direction in relation to consideration of business cases. Since establishment, Building Queensland has received one ministerial direction—in 2017 relating to the preparation of an update and public release of the Cross River Rail detailed business case.

Mr POWELL: Has the minister's office ever contacted Building Queensland to request a change in agenda?

CHAIR: Before we start, bear in mind that we are looking at the expenditure in the current budget year. You are talking about some past decisions. Member for Glass House, if you are asking these questions, you have to tie it to expenditure in this year.

Mr POWELL: All of these questions relate back to Building Queensland's responsibility as defined on page 30 of the SDS for publishing business cases. Again, I am just requesting—

CHAIR: They do indeed, and I give you that, but certainly we are here examining future expenditure. We are not trawling over past decisions.

Mr POWELL: Has anyone from the minister's office contacted Building Queensland to revise an agenda for a board meeting?

Mr Gould: Again, with Building Queensland and our governance arrangements in relation to the conduct of our board meetings, agendas are set in consultation with the board. Where business cases are being considered by the board of Building Queensland, at the conclusion of those processes papers are prepared for consideration by the board in relation to those business cases. As indicated, we have not received ministerial direction in relation to agenda items that have appeared on Building Queensland board meetings.

Mr POWELL: Not ministerial, but that does not answer the question about ministerial staff.

CHAIR: I think the answer has been given in that case. I remind the member once again that we are not trawling through past decisions; we are looking at things relating to future expenditure.

Mr POWELL: Yes. We are trying to also ascertain whether it is common practice within this government for the minister's office to direct the preparation of agenda papers for Building Queensland. I think that is a fair question to be asking about—

CHAIR: I think you are pretty marginal there.

Mr DICK: On a point of order, that was not the question that was asked.

Mr POWELL: That was the question that was asked.

Mr DICK: 'Do you interfere in the preparation of board papers?'

CHAIR: Bearing in mind my requests about relating it to current expenditure, do you have any further questions, member for Glass House?

Mr POWELL: Yes. I thank Mr Gould; I appreciate it. I have a question to the acting director-general. I refer to Better Planning for Queensland's service area highlight to 'deliver modern and innovative regional plans' on page 12 of the SDS. Outside of South-East Queensland, when was the last regional plan completed?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. There are currently 11 statutory and one non-statutory regional plans across Queensland, with the most recent being the South East Queensland Regional Plan in 2017, which is known as ShapingSEQ. I am just checking through a table to find the most recent one before that. Prior to that, it would appear to have been 2013, which was the Darling Downs Regional Plan. There is work underway, as you probably know, to finalise a North Queensland Regional Plan. I understand that shortly the minister will be meeting with the North Queensland regional planning committee to discuss the draft of that North Queensland Regional Plan. The government is working with local government and stakeholders on the North Queensland Regional Plan. The plan signals the government's commitment to better planning for North Queensland.

North Queensland is the region in the state not to have a regional plan, and there is a reason for this. The region is home to a diverse range of complex environments, ranging from the mineral-rich provinces in the west to areas of unique environmental values along the coastline. The resolution of the complex and at times competing interests within this region has been challenging. Since February the department has been strengthening the plan to promote increased resilience and safety from natural hazards following the floods. The north-west regional planning committee will be formed and it will comprise representatives from six local councils. The draft regional plan will proceed to public consultation once it is released.

Mr POWELL: It has been nearly three years since the development of a North Queensland Regional Plan was first announced. I note that, other than the South-East Queensland plan, there has not been a regional plan done under this government—the last one being under the LNP. When will the North Queensland Regional Plan be finally finished?

Ms Power: The North Queensland Regional Plan is in a very substantial draft. It is my understanding that the minister will be meeting shortly with the planning committee, so it will be this year.

Mr POWELL: Thank you. On that note, earlier this year the member for Mundingburra blamed Townsville City Council's planning scheme for the government's proposed youth foyer development. Before the development was shelved, did the minister ever express any concerns over the delays in the North Queensland Regional Plan which impact upon the Townsville city planning scheme?

CHAIR: Member, you are straying into standing order 112 territory about debating an argument and opinion. I am going to let the question through, and the acting director-general can cover that in the way that she sees fit.

Ms Power: Certainly not to me. I am sorry, I have no recollection and have not been advised of that.

Mr POWELL: Still on the North Queensland Regional Plan, how much has the department spent on the project since it was first announced in 2016?

Ms Power: I will have to come back to you on that. I do not have the specific details on the cost.

Mr POWELL: I have a couple of supplementaries to that. How much has been spent? How much is intended to be spent to complete the project? That is, what has been spent to date and what will be spent?

Ms Power: I can advise that in the 2019-20 budget we have allocated \$94,000 to ensure the North Queensland Regional Plan can be delivered, but I would have to go back to check previous expenditure.

Mr POWELL: If you could, that would be great, thank you. Again, referring to Better Planning for Queensland's service area highlights, given it has been a decade since the Far North Queensland Regional Plan was published, how much longer will the businesses and residents of Cairns need to wait before an updated plan is produced for them?

CHAIR: I think that question is about timing.

Mr POWELL: When will an updated plan for Far North Queensland be produced?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. The planning group does have a schedule for plans reviewed. I will take advice on when that one is to be, but I do not believe that it is in the next six months.

Mr POWELL: Is the schedule that you just referred to a public document?

Ms Power: No. It is not a public document. We have a list of plans that have already been—as I said, there are 11 statutory plans already, and we have a process to revise those.

Mr POWELL: Is that information able to be shared with the public? Can you table that schedule?

Ms Power: I would have to check if it is a documented schedule. I will talk to the planning group.

CHAIR: You are taking that one on notice at the moment?

Mr DICK: We will not take it on notice, but we will come back to the committee.

Mr BATT: My question is also to the acting director-general and is in relation to the Better Planning for Queensland's service area highlight to 'deliver modern and innovative regional plans', on page 12 of the SDS. Given it has been eight years since the Wide Bay Burnett Regional Plan was published, how much longer will businesses and residents of Bundaberg, Hervey Bay, Maryborough and Gympie need to wait before an updated plan is produced?

Mr DICK: You were in government for three of eight years.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Once again, this is a question about possible timing.

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. It is my understanding that the minister will make decisions about when plans are in fact reviewed. As per the previous question, I will ask the planning group about the time frames.

CHAIR: I am going to be good to you, member for Condamine. Do you have a question?

Mr POWELL: I have a question.

CHAIR: You sucked me into that one. Very briefly, member for Glass House.

Mr POWELL: I do not want to rush it, Mr Chair. I am not going to ask a brief one.

CHAIR: Okay, we will go to the member for Mount Ommaney.

Ms PUGH: Minister, I refer to page 12 of the SDS and note your opening remarks about nuclear power. Can the minister outline what impacts nuclear power plants might have on the planning system in Queensland?

Mr DICK: I advise the committee that if the federal government was to proceed with a nuclear power plant for Queensland it would likely be defined as a utility installation under the Planning Regulation. While the use is likely to fall within this definition, it should be noted that the definition has been developed based on an environment where nuclear power plants were never envisaged. As a consequence, planning schemes and planning provisions across the state are unlikely to include adequate controls to appropriately manage the impact of such a use. Such a proposal would likely place a large burden on the local government and the state government agencies in the assessment. Any other associated or ancillary uses, such as the taking of water or storage of hazardous chemicals, to support the operation of the nuclear power plant would need to be assessed on their merits.

Unless prescribed in the Planning Regulation, local government planning schemes would determine the level of assessment. This means that in some communities this use may not require consultation with the community. Given the level of public interest that would arise with such a proposal, this would be inappropriate. The level of expertise required to assess this matter would be significant and would likely require overseas expertise being brought in to assess the proposal. The proposal would also require significant assessment in respect of the management of risk and hazard and the ongoing operational environment. The proposal is also likely to require extensive buffers and the delivery of costly new infrastructure to support the development.

Ultimately, the federal government would need to override state law. We would not be permitting this to proceed. That is a framework that would be applied if you could proceed with one; it is not the Queensland government's position to support it. Queensland as I understand does not support it. We need to rule this out once and for all. We do not need local governments being involved in this. We do not need local governments being concerned about this. That is why today I have written to a number of councils in the south-east, particularly those on the South-East Queensland coast, referring them to the most recent comments of energy minister Angus Taylor and calling on them to stand against this proposal. Councils of the south-east have enough to do without having to deal with the possible consequences of a nuclear power plant. I hope local government as one will express a voice against this throughout Queensland.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. Minister, page 10 of the Service Delivery Statements references the State Infrastructure Plan. What are the highlights of this year's State Infrastructure Plan Part B, and how are the Palaszczuk government's policy settings encouraging investment in our state?

Mr DICK: I thank the honourable member for his question. Yesterday I was delighted to be able to release the State Infrastructure Plan Part B, the 2019 update, highlighting the lowest infrastructure underspend in a decade, the second highest pipeline of public and private infrastructure projects in the country and the facilitation of significant private investment throughout Queensland. As I indicated yesterday, our key priority as a government is to create and support jobs for Queenslanders. The next four years will see a \$49.5 billion infrastructure investment rolled out across Queensland including \$12.9 billion over the next 12 months, which will support up to 40,500 jobs. More than 160 infrastructure proposals are in the planning phase in the 2019 pipeline including, I am pleased to report to the committee, 67 new projects. Furthermore, 40 proposals have moved from planning into delivery since 2018 and will be delivered over the next four years.

Since 2015 around 207,000 new jobs have been created for Queenslanders by the Palaszczuk Labor government and this updated SIP highlights that there are plenty more on the way. I think the really good part about this update is that for the first time it gives an overview regionally about infrastructure investment, but also it sets out public and private infrastructure investment in Queensland. Honourable members do not have to take my word for it; in March 2019 the Deloitte Access Economics Investment Monitor recorded Queensland's \$146.8 billion infrastructure pipeline—public and private—as the second largest in Australia. The report also found that state and local government investment in infrastructure is a key driver for Australia's total economic growth.

We are doing the heavy lifting. What we need from the Commonwealth government is for them to bring forward their expenditure not in the forwards—not outside the forward estimates—but right now. We have put our money into Queensland and we need the federal government to fund us without holding the threat over us that they will not invest in infrastructure unless we recycle, which means selling assets. That has to be taken off the table. That has been conclusively considered by Queenslanders at successive elections. They do not want that to occur. What they do want is the federal government to invest in infrastructure in Queensland.

Ms PUGH: Minister, page 12 of the SDS references a better planning system. Can the minister outline how the government is working to protect jobs using the planning system in Queensland?

Mr DICK: It was a great pleasure last week for me to ensure that one of Queensland's favourite beers will continue to flow off the production line at the iconic and historic XXXX brewery at Milton. In doing so, we will secure 150 manufacturing jobs in Queensland. Last week I approved a 15-year extension to the registration of the brewery to ensure the ongoing operations of that brewery at Milton. I do not make those decisions lightly but I need to secure and grow jobs in Queensland. The 15-year extension will give certainty to the company so it can continue to operate into the future within approved limits. More importantly, the decision provides certainty to 150 workers and their families.

We want to support manufacturing jobs across Queensland. My decision enables Lion to continue operating from the same premises that have been the home of XXXX for more than 140 years by ensuring that existing uses on this site can continue even as the area experiences growth intensification, particularly residential growth. That large brick building with Mr XXXX on the side is a part of our history. The building, the signage and its position are part of the fabric of Brisbane and they are part of the fabric of Queensland. We need to preserve that manufacturing facility from urban encroachment. I am very pleased to do that and very pleased to be able to support those manufacturing jobs.

Mr MADDEN: My question, again, is of the minister. Minister, I refer to page 5 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can you advise the committee of any new developments in the Building Our Regions program?

Mr DICK: As we touched on earlier, the Building Our Regions program demonstrates our government's commitment to working in partnership with regional councils to deliver job-creating infrastructure in regional communities that improves livability and economic conditions. As of 30 June this year, the \$365 million Building Our Regions program has approved nearly \$295 million in funding towards 223 infrastructure projects across 66 local governments in regional Queensland, supporting more than 2,400 construction jobs. This funding has leveraged further financial co-contributions of almost \$487 million for local governments and the federal government as well as the private sector to create a total value of capital expended of \$779½ million. For \$295 million invested by the state, we have leveraged almost \$500 million, which I think is a pretty good return for the Queensland taxpayer.

I want to acknowledge the partnership we have had with local governments to deliver that. Munro Martin Parklands in Cairns, a very important public space in the middle of the city, will be upgraded. I was out at Biloela a little while ago to see improvements with the Biloela industrial estate—\$450,000 from the Building Our Regions program, supported and matched by \$450,000 from the Banana shire. Without that project, 30 proposed industrial lots cannot be connected to the Biloela sewerage system. That project includes delivery of a pump station, rising main, emergency outflow storage and emergency generator with council estimating the project to support five jobs, which is a really good thing for a little community but a vibrant community like Biloela. There is also the project revitalising the Maryborough CBD.

There is a whole range of projects that are happening. I observe and note that we are supporting 223 projects across 66 councils—social infrastructure, economic infrastructure and community and business infrastructure, particularly in Maryborough CBD to support businesses. On the weekend, I did note that it appears that the defunct Royalty for the Regions program has now infected the federal coalition. I saw the Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, spend \$11 million of federal taxpayer money, including Queensland taxpayer money, to upgrade golf courses around the country. Do not get me wrong: golf is a great pastime and a great sport, but this is \$11 million of federal money, including \$250,000 to upgrade fairway irrigation at the St George Golf Club, in a drought-stricken town. I am not sure that even Jeff Seeney would do that—and he was not slow on the old boondoggle. Really, that cannot be a priority for infrastructure investment by the Commonwealth. We need money for roads, rail and industrial development in Queensland. I call on the federal government to review that sort of pork-barrelling for National Party electorates—it will go to National Party electorates—and to get into economic infrastructure.

CHAIR: I refer to page 10 of the SDS, noting recent comments by the federal Treasurer that the states are hampering delivery of the Commonwealth's record \$100 billion infrastructure program. What is the Commonwealth infrastructure program actually delivering for Queensland?

Mr DICK: The federal Treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, should talk to his friends at the National Australia Bank who said that the federal government's budget announces \$100 billion of infrastructure spending over the next 10 years, although it appears that a good deal of the money is either scheduled

to be on the forward estimate period or already committed from the previous budget. There is no funding for Cross River Rail but \$2 billion for a fast rail link between Melbourne and Geelong that, when announced, did not have an alignment and was not called for by the Victorian government. In fact, the Victorian government described it as a 'thought bubble'. Josh Frydenberg's first budget pledged duplication of the—

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

Mr DICK: How good is Queensland—except when it comes to infrastructure, and you get nothing?

CHAIR: Order! Everyone knows the standing orders about comments through the chair and about quarrelling. I invite the minister to continue.

Mr DICK: Only the federal coalition could do that. Vote Labor in Geelong and you get a \$2 billion fast rail; vote LNP in Queensland and you get nothing. That is what happened as a result of the federal election. There will be no fast rail in South-East Queensland and no fast rail to the Sunshine Coast but a fast rail from Melbourne to Geelong. Of course, Labor won that seat. What a pleasing result that was.

Josh Frydenberg's first budget pledged \$500 million for the M1 from Daisy Hill to Logan. It also pledged \$180 million for the Bruce Highway to Cairns. Regrettably, this funding is not provided for in the forward estimates—so not in this financial year or the next three financial years but in the 'onwards forecast'. They pledged \$500 million for the Rockhampton Ring Road but only \$80 million over the next four years. There is \$720 million that will not come for another five years. There is no federal funding for the Mackay Ring Road stage 2. The Linkfield Road overpass on the north side of Brisbane gets \$100 million beyond the forward estimates. The only record Mr Frydenberg's budget sets is for the amount of infrastructure to be delivered beyond the forward estimates! That is not good enough for Queensland or for Queenslanders.

Mr MICKELBERG: New South Wales seems to be able to deliver infrastructure.

Mr DICK: I take that question from the member for Buderim.

Mr Mickelberg interjected.

CHAIR: Order!

Mr DICK: I am happy to continue to take questions from the member for Buderim. He says that New South Wales gets its funding because it is selling public assets.

Mr MICKELBERG: Because they can work with the federal government.

CHAIR: Member for Buderim, you will be warned in a moment. Can we let the minister finish.

Mr DICK: That is the truth. The member for Buderim knows that. We know that the LNP spent \$70 million—or put it in a pile and burnt it—when it came to Strong Choices. What a waste of public money! After the Queensland community made it clear in 2012 that it did not support asset sales, the LNP still wanted to spend \$70 million of public money and sell public assets. Of course, the consequence of that was the greatest majority in Queensland history destroyed in a single term by Campbell Newman.

The federal government needs to understand that Queenslanders do not want their assets sold. We will not buy into asset recycling. We will not be held hostage. We want a fast rail. We want all of that money—maybe just into heavy rail; maybe that would be a good start for the federal coalition—but let us get our fair share for Queensland. That is what the Premier has been calling for. I back her 100 per cent on that.

Mr MADDEN: I refer to page 12 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can the minister advise the committee as to why costs for SARA approvals have increased?

Mr DICK: The State Assessment Referral Authority undertakes complicated cross-agency assessment work for a range of developments in Queensland. It is necessary for SARA to ensure that proper analysis, proper coordination and proper consultation occurs across other state agencies. Overall, SARA is seen by other jurisdictions across Australia as delivering best practice. This is not just regulators in other states but also developers who work across state boundaries.

During 2018-19, SARA issued a total of 2,356 decisions, with the estimated average administrative cost per decision made of \$3,749. Since 2017, the number of decisions made by SARA has decreased, to 2,842 in 2017-18 and 2,356 in 2018-19. This decrease in applications has been due in part to the planning reforms which removed unnecessary simple assessments by the state. On the other hand, there was an increase in the complexity of applications which, comparatively, require more

time and effort than in previous years. In simple terms, we are now seeing more complex matters making their way to SARA. This has led to an increase in the estimated average administration cost per decision from \$3,581 in 2017-18 to \$3,749 in 2018-19.

The problem is that, despite all of the work we do, not all applications necessarily or actually proceed to delivery. Take for example the costs and effort by the state to assess the Brisbane City Council's Mount Coot-tha zip-line application with SARA's role as a referral agency. There was a total cost to the state of \$34,000. I am informed by the department that the total referral fee paid by the Brisbane City Council as the applicant was only \$17,000. That means the state footed the bill for almost half the cost—around \$16,000—for a development proposed on land council did not own for a project that was scrapped as soon as the new Lord Mayor took power. I do not want to see a repeat of that.

I will not carry the can for hare-brained schemes that council dreams up and does not deliver. We have seen the LNP council in trouble with the blowout in terms of the Kingsford Smith project. We saw council members pump out pictures of themselves at a faster rate than Kim Kardashian, all at ratepayer expense. Then we saw them cause taxpayer funded experts to waste their valuable time on a project council later withdrew. I have asked the department to undertake a review of this matter and of those fees and charges that are paid by councils to ensure that we fairly recover what we are entitled to when we conduct this work.

Mr POWELL: I have a question around priority development areas, referred to on page 44 of the SDS. Acting Director-General, what is the total amount the department forecasts to receive for the sale of state land as part of the Oxley PDA project?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. As you know, Economic Development Queensland renews and repurposes surplus and under-utilised property with the intention of creating jobs, driving private sector investment and delivering community outcomes. The former Oxley Secondary College is a great example of renewing under-utilised state land. The former secondary college closed in 2000 and was declared surplus to the requirements of the former department of education and training in 2001. The Oxley PDA Interim Land Use Plan regulates development in the PDA until the development scheme is in place. To answer the actual question about what they expect to be able to return from it, I will take further information from EDQ and come back to you.

Mr POWELL: While you are getting that, Acting Director-General, I might ask for the same forecast regarding the Carseldine PDA as well. If I can go back to the Oxley PDA—

Mr DICK: Hang on. Do you want to take that question?

Ms Power: I will get the information around Carseldine for you as well.

Mr POWELL: Thank you.

CHAIR: I just note that at the end of this session we will be coming back and spending a few minutes on those questions where we need to get more information.

Mr POWELL: Can I just clarify, Mr Chair: if that information is not back before the end of this session, are we able to take that on notice to be reported back at a later time?

Mr DICK: One step at a time.

CHAIR: Yes, but I think that information will be back. So far we have not needed to go too far down that track, but let us cross that bridge when we come to it.

Mr POWELL: Thank you. Regarding the Oxley PDA, has the department made a determination yet as to how many storeys will be allowed to be built on that site?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. I will ask EDQ that as well.

Mr POWELL: And as to when the development scheme for that site would also be complete.

Ms Power: I will get the three answers for you.

Mr POWELL: Thank you. I now turn to the Mackay priority development area. I note that in the budget papers there is hundreds of millions of dollars allocated for priority development areas located in Brisbane in Budget Paper No. 3 at pages 108 and 109. How much has been allocated towards the Mackay priority development area?

Ms Power: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am just getting the details about the Mackay PDA now. In general terms, I want to confirm that the budget that EDQ is expecting to achieve through private sector investment in 2019-20 is \$273 million. The value of the work that they are doing is expected to generate \$273 million of private sector investment across all their PDAs.

Mr POWELL: Across all PDAs?

Ms Power: Yes.

Mr POWELL: Okay; thank you.

Ms Power: Again, I will have to get the individual dollars for Mackay from Economic Development Queensland.

Mr POWELL: Okay; thank you. While that is being done, Minister, I note that comment then by the acting director-general that EDQ is expecting \$273 million to be raised from private investment in priority development areas around the state. Why then cannot the government keep nine hectares of the Oxley PDA protected for environmental purposes without charging the council?

Mr DICK: We have made a very reasonable proposal to the council principally around land at Nathan for the council to use their bushland levy to secure bushland in Brisbane, which is not unreasonable.

Mr POWELL: Taxpayers already own it. Why would you expect the ratepayers to pay for it again?

CHAIR: Order, member for Glass House.

Mr DICK: I will take one question at a time.

CHAIR: The minister is just saying—

Mr POWELL: And it was with regard to Oxley, Minister.

CHAIR: Order, member for Glass House! Minister, I ask you to continue.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. As the member for Glass House knows, the proposed transfer of the land at Oxley is a package that we have put to council—the Nathan land adjacent to the Toohey Forest reserve, Carseldine adjacent to the Carseldine Urban Village, Oxley within the Oxley Priority Development Area, Yeronga within the Yeronga Priority Development Area and Queen Bess Street. That is because on 26 February this year Brisbane City Council wrote to me asking that the land at Nathan be ‘sold to council at a concessional rate’ and it is not surprising that I wrote back to the council and said, ‘Yes, I’m happy to sell the land to council at a concessional rate.’

Notwithstanding the fact that Brisbane City Council taxpayers pay a bushland preservation levy which supports the council’s Bushland Acquisition Program of \$34.5 million, the Lord Mayor then intervened and said ‘Well, we need you to pay on the basis that it’s going to be developed commercially.’ That is what he did. He intervened in it when we put a very reasonable proposal to council to secure that land. Council spent \$5.2 million from its Bushland Acquisition Program to purchase 68 Carrara Street and 8 Nurrann Street in Mount Gravatt East. Do you know how many trees were on the land that they spent \$5.2 million of ratepayers’ money on? The number of trees on that land was zero. There was not a tree. When an LNP councillor like the Deputy Mayor, Krista Adams, is in trouble they are willing to splurge \$5.2 million of a bushland levy on land that is not bushland, but when the state comes to them with a very reasonable proposal to secure—

Mr POWELL: And the state can make \$273 million and cannot transfer land—

CHAIR: Order, member for Glass House! You have been interjecting a fair bit—

Mr DICK: I am happy to take a further question.

CHAIR: We will take that interjection if you want, but, Minister, please continue.

Mr DICK: I wrote back to the council. I said, ‘Here’s a proposal. You can have Nathan. You can have all of this other land for a very reasonable amount of about \$3.2 million.’ This is a very good deal for the Brisbane City Council.

Mr POWELL: What is the deal for the Oxley land alone?

Mr DICK: Very, very good deal for the Brisbane City Council.

Mr POWELL: Did you hand over the Oxley bushland free of charge?

Mr DICK: Just let me finish, member, and then you can ask me another question. I am happy for you to do that. The Lord Mayor has rejected the government’s proposal. It is a mess and it does not need to be.

Mr POWELL: Exactly.

Mr DICK: We can finish this this week—

Mr POWELL: The ratepayers of Queensland already own it.

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, you are about to be warned if you continue to go on that way.

Mr DICK: We can finish this this week. I also note that the state has to pay the council when the council wants land from us. We had to pay \$3.6 million—

Mr POWELL: For commercial reasons.

Mr DICK:—for land at 548 Mains Road, Nathan, for the Mains Road-Kessels Road project which reduced the amount of money we had available for public transport and other infrastructure purposes. The federal government also demanded money out of council. The federal government required the Redland City Council to pay \$4.1 million to purchase bushland at Birkdale. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. We are just asking—

Mr POWELL: For commercial reasons.

Mr DICK:—what is reasonable for Queensland and what is reasonable for taxpayers. We are not seeking a full commercial return. We are seeking a discounted commercial return as the council requested. Let us get on with it.

Mr POWELL: The land is not going to receive a commercial return though. It is protected for environmental reasons.

CHAIR: Do you have a question, member for Glass House? Do not make a statement; ask a question. Ask a question please.

Mr POWELL: Minister, how much of the Carseldine priority development area will be protected for bushland and open space?

Mr DICK: I am happy to get that information for the committee. I do not know immediately, but I am happy to try to get that before we conclude.

CHAIR: Are there any further questions from those on my left?

Mr POWELL: Yes. I have a number of Infrastructure questions that I would like to put to the Coordinator-General please.

CHAIR: Could I suggest that we come back to that one or put it to the minister?

Mr POWELL: Where is the Coordinator-General, Mr Chair?

CHAIR: Okay. Do you want to go to another question in the meantime?

Mr DICK: We will find where he is. I do not know where he is.

Mr POWELL: While we are waiting, does the acting director-general have a response to those previous questions?

CHAIR: Just bear in mind and remember that under the program we adopted the Coordinator-General was in the first half.

Mr POWELL: No, Mr Chair. Sorry but, with all due respect, Infrastructure was set under the second half. The Coordinator-General has responsibilities under State Development—sure—but he also has a responsibility—

CHAIR: That may be so, but on the program—

Mr POWELL:—under infrastructure coordinated projects.

CHAIR: I understand where you are coming from, member for Glass House, but under the program that this committee adopted it was very specifically the Coordinator-General in that first half.

Mr POWELL: I raise a point of order. The Clerk clarified on Tuesday that the timetables do not prevent members from asking questions to ministers or their staff about the entire portfolio.

CHAIR: Yes, indeed.

Mr POWELL: I think it is very fair to be able to ask Infrastructure questions of the Coordinator-General in the time that is allocated for Infrastructure.

CHAIR: Indeed. I can understand where you are coming from, but I point out again—we are being circular about this—we have a program that this committee voted on and adopted which specifically said when the Coordinator-General will be here.

Mr POWELL: I am not disputing that, Mr Chair. Infrastructure is in this component.

CHAIR: Do you have a question in the meantime?

Mr POWELL: I have questions for the Coordinator-General.

CHAIR: All right. I am going to throw to the—

Mr MICKELBERG: Does the government not want to answer questions on infrastructure?

CHAIR: Member for Glass House, or who was that? Buderim?

Mr MICKELBERG: It was me.

CHAIR: Good. You are owning up to that one. I have already said I could warn you. I will not say that again. We will come back to over here. I am going to ask—

Mr POWELL: Sorry, but I have more questions.

CHAIR: You do have another question? Okay. Member for Glass House.

Mr POWELL: I have a question to the chief executive officer of the South Bank Corporation. I refer to the new initiatives for 2019-20 on page 38 of the SDS. It makes reference to the riverside redevelopment part of South Bank. Given that that redevelopment was first announced in June 2017, how is that project a new initiative?

Mr Delves: I thank the honourable member for his question. In June 2017, the Hon. Jackie Trad, the Deputy Premier and the minister for planning, announced that the riverside restaurants building adjacent to the Clem Jones Promenade would be demolished and returned to open space as parkland. The riverside restaurants buildings had remained vacant, as you are probably aware, since the 2011 floods and had been severely damaged. The South Bank Corporation board then proceeded to approve and develop a project that would be suitable for that location. That project was allocated a funding amount to determine a project that would deliver a completely new experience for the people of Queensland. That site would deliver a range of different offerings, including a range of parklands and public amenity through other facilities.

Mr POWELL: Exactly how many times has the government made an announcement relating to this redevelopment?

CHAIR: I think I will allow that one.

Mr POWELL: Very wise.

CHAIR: Of course it is. I am the chair.

Mr Delves: I am not aware of the government announcements that have been made in relation to this matter.

Mr POWELL: Just so you know, it is at least twice now. It is hardly a new initiative. Whose decision was it to change the original plans?

Mr Delves: As a result of geotechnical and other works that were done on the site, it was a decision of our South Bank Corporation board to reassess the potential that we had in connection with that site. A decision was made to attend to remediation works and a budget was made in July 2019 for the South Bank Corporation board to approve an amount of moneys to attend to remediation works adjacent to that original project. The total cost of the two projects amounted to a total of \$18 million. The first amount of works is underway currently, and we will go to tender for the second project once the first project is completed.

Mr POWELL: Do we have a month and year when those two projects will be finished?

Mr Delves: The target date for the completion of both projects is December 2020.

Mr POWELL: Another just under 18 months for both projects to be completed?

Mr Delves: Our target at the moment is to try to bring it back so that the public can utilise it over the Christmas period in 2020.

CHAIR: We have had quite a few questions on my left. As we are running out of time—

Mr POWELL: Have we found the Coordinator-General yet?

CHAIR: Thank you member for Glass House. We do not need that statement.

Mr MADDEN: My question is to the minister. I refer to page 15 of the Service Delivery Statements, which refers to funds paid by the department to the Brisbane City Council in relation to South Bank and the Roma Street Parkland. Can the minister provide further information about these arrangements?

Mr DICK: I thank the member for Ipswich West. There is an arrangement with the Brisbane City Council for the operation of South Bank and Roma Street Parkland. This is a legacy decision made under the premiership of Campbell Newman. In 2012, we saw some big announcements from the

government. We saw claims that the South Bank Corporation would cease to exist from 2013. That is what LNP mayor Graham Quirk said. I think the reality is that Campbell Newman always had a bee in his bonnet about South Bank not being in the control of the Brisbane City Council. It was just another one of his obsessions that he could not let go when he became premier. Like so many of those obsessions, it did not end well. The bureaucrats at City Hall could see what he could not—that it made better sense to keep South Bank in the ownership of the state, but they were happy to take the staff associated with the maintenance.

We have ended up with a situation where the South Bank Corporation continues, governed by its legislation, but the operations and maintenance are conducted by a wholly owned subsidiary of the Brisbane City Council. Since then, we have seen the council get into all sorts of difficulties—the blowout on Kingsford Smith Drive, the failed attempt of a zip-line. I do not want to see the state being responsible to fill in those black holes.

The corporation has commissioned an audit of fees charged by the Brisbane City Council to make sure that we all get value for money. There is no agenda here; we just want to ensure that we get value for money. I support the work of the corporation in ensuring that occurs.

Mr MADDEN: I refer to page 44 of the Service Delivery Statements, which refers to Economic Development Queensland's role in marketing industrial land. Could you outline what plans EDQ has for lands held at Nathan for this purpose and whether the Brisbane City Council has any firm proposals for this land?

Mr DICK: I will try to be brief on this. We covered it earlier. On 15 July this year, I wrote to the Brisbane Lord Mayor, Adrian Schrinner, offering for the properties concerned to be considered as part of the council's bushland preservation program. I have talked about the landholdings that we put on the table. The state is also seeking the council's cooperation to install a visual marker, as recommended by the Queensland Heritage Council, on the site of the former rose garden at Yeerongpilly Green.

On 26 February, Councillor David McLachlan wrote to me on behalf of the council asking that the land be sold to the council at a concessional rate. I then responded by offering the council exactly what it asked for: a significant concession on the commercial value of the land along with a package of additional land tracts across Brisbane to provide even more benefits. Brisbane City ratepayers already pay a bushland preservation levy, which in turn supports the council's bushland acquisition program—\$34.5 million budgeted for this financial year. The Lord Mayor then responded, changing the council's position, requesting the land for free. It is not acceptable to the state.

This can be fixed quickly. We are calling on the Lord Mayor to intervene. Let us get on with it and let us give the community what they want. We cannot do this. We have to build roads, schools and hospitals and EDQ has other projects it has to fund. I am really imploring the Lord Mayor and members of the LNP to ensure that we can resolve this as quickly as possible.

I want to thank the community advocates around that Toohey Forest land in particular for their work. I am happy to deliver that. I think they know that we have to do it at a sensible price—not at a commercial price but at the discounted price that the council asked for. I hope we can do that. The Coordinator-General is here. Perhaps we can give up the rest of the time for questions to the opposition.

CHAIR: If the Coordinator-General could come forward, we can get a brief question.

Mr POWELL: Sorry? A brief question?

CHAIR: Yes, a brief question, bearing in mind the time frames that we are up against. May I point out to the member that you had the Coordinator-General in front of you a little while ago and through our graces we have brought him back.

Mr POWELL: Because I was told to ask infrastructure questions after the break.

CHAIR: Can I point out to the member that there is no need to be argumentative. There are standing orders about that. If you want to ask a question, now is the time. You could have done it earlier.

Mr DICK: There is another hearing. We are happy to continue and the Coordinator-General is happy to continue to make up any lost time to the committee.

CHAIR: Indeed.

Mr POWELL: My question is to the Coordinator-General. I refer to the service area objective to assess, approve, develop and deliver projects at page 7 of the SDS. Can the Coordinator-General outline the approval process for Carmichael mine's rail line?

Mr Broe: The approval process? The Carmichael rail line was broken up into two bits. The first section at the western end was part of the Carmichael mine and rail project. It went through an EIS initially through me and then with the Commonwealth. The section at the western end was called the North Galilee Basin Rail Project and that went through a separate EIS also with me and then with the Commonwealth. Then there were subsequent approvals that both of those sections of the rail line went through.

Mr POWELL: What outstanding approvals remain for those two rail projects?

Mr Broe: For those two rail projects, they have all the environmental approvals through almost 30 material change of use applications that I approved. The main issue that we are currently working on with Adani is called a deed of access and sublease, which is basically a licence they need to build and operate the rail line within the rail corridor, which I acquired back in 2017. Sorry, I had to run back and work on more decisions.

Mr POWELL: That is understood. The requirement for that licence to be approved resides with you?

Mr Broe: Yes, jointly with DTMR, because part of the process is that there would be a sublease from DTMR to Adani to operate the rail line and I look after it once it has been built and they will have a lease with me, basically—a licence with me. Those discussions are going very well and we hope to wrap them up in the next two weeks, as per the published online list of outstanding approvals for the project.

Mr POWELL: If I have heard you correctly, the licence to build and operate the rail line, approvals sit with yourself and DTMR?

Mr Broe: Yes, led by me. We are coordinating it all.

Mr POWELL: On 18 June 2019 the Premier stated that approval of Adani's proposed 200-kilometre rail line was a federal issue. Can you please clarify once again what part of your approval process resides with the federal government?

Mr Broe: The federal government's role in the rail line is through ONRSR, the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator. Adani need approvals from ONRSR who regulate rail safety across the nation and Adani is working with them to get the relevant accreditations and approvals which are split up into two stages and they are both also published in the online table of the outstanding milestones that I just referred to.

Mr POWELL: Just to be clear, are the outstanding approvals more a federal responsibility or a state responsibility or a combination of both?

Mr Broe: They are joint. Both agencies are involved. I would have to go back and check what the Premier said but both agencies are involved and have remaining approvals to grant to Adani for the rail line.

Mr POWELL: Potentially the Premier has misled Queenslanders by stating that.

Mr Broe: No, definitely not.

CHAIR: I will rule that question out of order. We will go to a quick question from the member for Maiwar before we wrap it up.

Mr BERKMAN: Late last year there were more than three and a half thousand community members who wrote submissions opposing the BCC's proposed zip-line attraction at Mount Coot-tha and yet Brisbane's Lord Mayor at the time publicly stated that this huge number of objections wouldn't factor into assessment of the DA. How can we have any confidence in Queensland's planning system or confidence that it sufficiently centres communities while it allows for such flagrant disregard of communities' views?

Mr DICK: I suppose the simple answer to that is because local government is, as all levels are, ultimately accountable to the people through the ballot box. I am not going to comment on the specific merits of that petition, but there are many petitions that are signed. From a personal perspective, I have made it very clear in my role as the minister for planning, for example, I do not want to be local government. I am not seeking to be local government because the people of Queensland elect local government representatives every four years. They need to be held to account for their decisions. Ratepayers pay their salary, they pay for councillors across Queensland. From my perspective, the ballot box is the way that people can hold councils to account.

I commented a little bit earlier on SARA and the cost to the state of the zip-line project, which we cannot recover—about \$16,000. The department is looking at that now. We do not want to be left holding the bag for a bad project that cost us \$34,000 but we could only recover about \$17,000 or \$18,000 and so we are left paying that bill. We are concerned about these decisions as well. I am not sure there is any other answer other than political pressure that ratepayers or citizens can put on elected representatives and councils about particular projects. They got a good result in the end and I think that was the right result and I think that is recognised. I think there was some dogmatism by the LNP council. It became a matter of pride rather than a matter of logic and ultimately the project was defeated. I think at multiple levels it was a failure.

I think people can still have confidence in the planning system, but I think they need to hold their local councillors and council to account. That is the government closest to people. The number of people councillors represent are less than the people you and I represent so there is an opportunity for them to be very direct, I think, in what they expect of councillors and councils.

CHAIR: The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of state development, manufacturing, infrastructure and planning is about to expire. Firstly, are we happy to table the two documents we have here?

Mr MADDEN: Yes.

CHAIR: Tabled. There are a number of issues that the minister was coming back to us about.

Mr DICK: Yes, the Oxley, Carseldine and Mackay PDAs. With respect to the Mackay PDA the state has delegated powers under the Economic Development Act to the Mackay Regional Council. The PDA was declared at the request of the Mackay Regional Council. The Mackay Waterfront PDA is a project of the Mackay Regional Council and questions about it should go the Mackay Regional Council. Proposed building height levels for the Oxley PDA are specified in the draft planning scheme which is available on the department's website and has been subject to extensive consultation. I think it is six storeys. Am I not mistaken? The member for Mount Ommaney is nodding her head. Is that right?

Mr Camden: Yes.

Mr DICK: That is from the general manager of EDQ. I anticipate finalising the Oxley PDA development scheme in August. The expected payments for the Carseldine Urban Village within the Fitzgibbon PDA will be determined once the development application for each stage is lodged and approved and a sales program commences. The sales program is expected to commence for the first stage in late 2019. In regard to bushland protection within the Carseldine precinct, it is important that any development in this area respects the natural surroundings which is why a major feature of the village design will be retention of around 75 per cent of existing bushland totalling approximately 22 hectares of green and open space within the PDA.

In respect to the earlier question about how much has been spent on the North Queensland Regional Plan, to date, of the 13 regional plans in operation across Queensland, Labor governments have delivered 10 and only three were delivered under the LNP. I can advise that \$301,638 has been spent to date on preparing the North Queensland Regional Plan. I am advised that the North Queensland Regional Plan is being developed under the framework set out under the Planning Act. This is in contrast to the previous regional plans, Cape York, Central Queensland and the Darling Downs, which were not required to undertake the same level of consultation, nor did they require an implementation plan. The cost of these plans was as follows: Central Queensland Regional Plan \$67,000; Darling Downs Regional Plan \$60,000; Cape York Regional Plan \$140,000.

CHAIR: The only outstanding matter is in relation to CRR maps. Do we have any information on that?

Ms Power: I am advised that EDQ has not prepared any plans in relation to the Boggo Road Cross River Rail station. We may have plans on file but they have been sent by the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority to us as part of consultation by Cross River Rail on land use planning for areas surrounding the proposed Cross River Rail station.

CHAIR: Minister, is there anything you want to add before we wrap up?

Mr DICK: No, thank you, other than to thank the committee for its thorough examination of my portfolio today. I also thank the committee staff for the great work they do. I also recognise the department staff who spent a lot of time and effort supporting me, not just for this estimates hearing but in my role as minister. I am very proud to lead this department which is driving economic development

and growth in our state and delivering jobs for Queenslanders wherever they live. I am very proud to lead the department and I thank them for the thoroughness with which they apply themselves to their duties each and every day.

CHAIR: The hearing will resume at 4 o'clock with the examination of estimates for the portfolio of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries.

Proceedings suspended from 3.48 pm to 4.01 pm.

**ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT, NATURAL RESOURCES AND
AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE—AGRICULTURAL
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES**

In Attendance

Hon. ML Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Mr B Murphy, Chief of Staff

Department of Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Dr E Woods, Director-General

Ms B Ditchfield, Deputy Director-General, Agriculture and Flood Recovery

Mr G Bolton, Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry

Mr M Letts, Chief Biosecurity Officer

Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges (QATC)

Mr C Mathisen, Acting Chief Executive Officer

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2019 for the portfolio of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 7.15 pm, and during that time we will suspend proceedings for a break between 5.30 and 5.45 pm.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue. They should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings this evening so that relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Please be advised that photographing or video recording proceedings by officials or members of the public is prohibited. Also, I remind you that food and drink, other than water, are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome to the hearing the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask the departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of agricultural industry development and fisheries open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair, and good afternoon to the committee. I thank the committee for providing me with an opportunity to make an opening statement on my portfolio. Firstly, I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather this afternoon and pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging. Today I am joined by my director-general, Dr Beth Woods, and my chief of staff, Brett Murphy. I am also joined by senior officers of the department, my office and statutory bodies.

The budget that this committee is examining is a Labor budget. It is unashamedly aimed at regional Queensland and the people who make incredible contributions to those regions and our state economy. It is a budget that unashamedly focuses on jobs and making sure that we deliver the jobs we need today and into the future. It is a budget delivering for the agricultural and fisheries sectors in

Queensland. This is a budget of growth. Simply put, for my portfolio this is a budget that is \$117 million greater than the 2014 budget delivered by the previous government. This budget is delivering, and I would like to reflect on what Labor has already delivered in this portfolio.

Under the government, agriculture and fisheries have seen the introduction of three net-free zones, fisheries reforms, new fisheries officers appointed across Queensland, the Biosecurity Capability Review, new investment in biosecurity, investment in cluster fencing, the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, the Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance, farm debt mediation legislation, reform on farm succession and the Drought and Climate Adaptation Program.

I am proud to be Queensland's Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries. As minister, I have enjoyed engaging with producers from right across Queensland. Since taking up the portfolio I have travelled close to 100,000 kilometres across the state to speak with beef producers, horticulturalists, fishers, forestry workers, abattoir workers, scientists and champions of the sector. All are very positive about the future of agriculture in the state to build on our prosperity.

To highlight some of the great work that is being done from farm to family dinner plate, the #eatqld campaign has been initiated. This is a simple process that all can be involved in, simply by having some quality Queensland food on your plate, be it at a cafe or at home. Take a photograph with your iPhone. Put it on social media using #eatqld. As agricultural minister, I am proud to be promoting our state's quality produce. With the use of social media, we can promote it even further.

This last year has seen a lot of events within the sector. There have been impacts on farms through incursions, ongoing biosecurity concerns, impacts on strawberry farmers, the federal election that resulted in a change of Commonwealth ministers, the ongoing impact of drought and a monsoonal event that devastated the beef industry in North-West Queensland.

I acknowledge the positive working relationship with the industry. As the committee would be aware, AgForce and the QFF are both members of the Agricultural Industry Advisory Council and have direct contact with me and the department.

It is through the hard work and dedication of more than 2,000 staff within my department that we can make a difference to the productivity and sustainability of agriculture in this state. Everywhere I go, something positive that I always hear is the value of our agricultural staff to Queensland producers. I thank them.

Finally, I have been very fortunate and forthright in my belief that the agriculture portfolio should be above politics where possible. I have offered briefings to all members on arising or ongoing issues. I maintain that offer. I welcome my department to brief any of the committee on the facts.

Chair, in addition to my opening statement, I wish to advise the committee of an amendment that needs to be made to the answer to question on notice No. 15(e). On the department's initial interpretation of the question, it was identified that one person's circumstances fell within the scope of the question. After further consideration by the department on the broad meaning of the word 'removed' contained within the question, we were provided with further advice that a second person's circumstances fell within the scope of that aspect of the question. Therefore, the response to that part of the question will be amended to read 'two'. I seek leave to table that amended answer to question on notice No. 15.

CHAIR: Are we happy to table that? That is so tabled.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The committee will now examine the portfolio area of agricultural industry development. I call the member for Gympie.

Mr PERRETT: Thank you for the opportunity to be here. My first question is to the director-general. With reference to page 8 of the SDS relating to the Biosecurity Queensland service area objectives of focusing on invasive plants and weeds, director-general can you please point out exactly where in the budget funding has been allocated to directly combat prickly acacia? What is the total of such funding over the next five years?

Dr Woods: In relation to the specifics of prickly acacia funding, following the flooding in North Queensland earlier this year and the risk that prickly acacia pod seeds may have been washed downstream, increasing the distribution and range from the current 33 million hectares in the north western and central western areas of Queensland to further south, we have actively in the department

reviewed our existing activities and considered what more needs to be done. You may also be aware that the former minister for agriculture and water resources, the Hon. Littleproud MP, announced a \$10 million funding commitment to a prickly acacia weed management program in early April 2019, just before the Commonwealth parliament was dissolved.

There are a range of existing activities that I would like to highlight. There was a discussion that took place between the minister and Minister Littleproud. I was not a participant in that discussion. My understanding is that no formal agreement has been established between the federal government and the Queensland government in relation to the funding announcement that Minister Littleproud made.

However, as you are well aware, prickly acacia is a weed of national significance and is regarded as one of the worst invasive plants in Australia. The impacts of prickly acacia on landholders include reduced pasture production, undesirable changes in pasture composition, stock hygiene problems and mustering and watering difficulties.

As a result, since 2015 the Palaszczuk government and the department have supported the control of prickly acacia through the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative. Over \$2.7 million has been provided for prickly acacia management projects delivered locally by natural resource management groups and local governments. Most recently, a further \$533,000 has been allocated from round 3 of the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative to the Southern Gulf NRM for the Flinders River catchment prickly acacia eradication program—a project activity that directly relates to the flooding and the risk that was created earlier this year.

In addition to those two activities, we have a \$1.7 million research project, which is continuing until 2020, to identify and test important potential biological control agents for prickly acacia. Biological control would obviously be by far the preferred control mechanism if we could make that happen because it would avoid any risk of contamination of product and would be significantly cheaper for landholders going forward. We have a \$1.7 million research project. It is focusing on four potential agents that have been identified from India and Ethiopia and it is showing great promise in identifying insects that may be able to assist in controlling prickly acacia.

An additional \$3 million over two years is now available under category D of the disaster recovery funding arrangements to local governments and natural resource management groups affected by the flooding earlier this year. Under this program, funding is available to help eradicate or manage weeds and pests that have developed as a direct result of the floods and the subsequent actions to save livestock which clearly included fodder drops, with the risks of weed seed spread that fodder movements always entail.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, on 29 March 2019 you issued a joint media statement with the then federal agriculture minister, David Littleproud, in which you acknowledged the threat prickly acacia posed and said—

That is why the state and federal governments are contributing \$5 million each over five years to run the program through 2023-24.

Where is this committed \$5 million for prickly acacia and why is it not in the budget?

Mr FURNER: No doubt there is history around the conversation with Mr Littleproud. It was on 7 March this year that I had a phone conversation with him. I acknowledge the fact that the director-general was not privy to that conversation, but my chief of staff certainly was. It was a conversation on the way back from the Gold Coast where I was attending another agricultural engagement. That conversation certainly related to the then agricultural minister seeking a commitment from the Queensland government to enter into a co-funding arrangement on prickly acacia. As outlined already by the director-general in terms of the costing details around prickly acacia and other initiatives under the Queensland Feral Pest Initiative, that was what was being explained to the then agricultural minister on that day.

Subsequent to that conversation, no doubt members would be aware, on 11 April the federal election was called. Certainly as outlined by the director-general in her answer, there was no agreement reached. The terms of the arrangements in that agreement were not consistent with what was agreed to and arranged verbally on 7 March.

Furthermore, my office and I have made several attempts to discuss this with the current minister, the Hon. Bridget McKenzie. I can inform the committee that next Wednesday I will be discussing that and other agricultural matters with her in Canberra. I seek leave to table the correspondence related to the matter that was raised with the Hon. Bridget McKenzie on 19 June.

CHAIR: We will lay that on the table and once we have had a look at that we will decide on whether it is tabled.

Mr FURNER: Furthermore, on a recent visit to Longreach I met with Desert Channels with regard to this matter and subsequently wrote to them thanking them for the opportunity to address this particular issue. It is important that we clarify the background with respect to the offer from the Commonwealth and the position of the Queensland government in this respect. I am pleased to clarify that and make certain that that is identified.

In hindsight, the media release does lead to some confusion, I do admit. That is regrettable. It is unfortunate that the Commonwealth government is seeking to politicise this event. The member for Gympie, in a show of bipartisan, accompanied me to North-West Queensland during those terrible monsoonal events and saw the effect on properties.

Most people would realise that the flooding from the Flinders River goes into the gulf and away from the area of the member for Maranoa's electorate. Next Wednesday I will be seeking some idea from the Commonwealth government about their intention in terms of where the \$5 million will be allocated. I know from my engagement with Desert Channels Queensland that their view is that there should be consideration given to spending money in the particular area that they look after. No doubt that is a matter for the Commonwealth and they will need to ensure that that is an area of interest to them.

You would certainly expect that as minister I would ensure that Queensland producers are looked after. That does not mean signing up to an offer from Canberra that is not good for everyone.

Mr PERRETT: On 19 June 2019, while on the ABC's *Queensland Country Hour*, you said that the state government was already delivering in battling prickly acacia. On the same program Leanne Kohler from Desert Channels Queensland, which you just mentioned—a group on the ground fighting the weed—seemed to completely disagree and said that the government is reneging on the \$5 million commitment for prickly acacia. Minister, can you please explain who is telling the truth here—you or Desert Channels?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, I think you are asking for an opinion on this and a hypothetical. Can I ask you to rephrase your question?

Mr PERRETT: The last section?

CHAIR: Yes, rephrase the question without breaching the standing orders.

Mr MADDEN: I do not think my friend has rephrased the question appropriately. I think he can ask the minister what he has said, but I do not think he can expect the minister to comment on what somebody else has said.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, are you telling the truth?

CHAIR: Wait. I believe that asking whether someone is telling the truth or not contains hypotheticals and imputations. I am giving you one last chance to rephrase the question without asking who is telling the truth.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, why does Desert Channels disagree with your view?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt, as identified both in the response from the director-general and in my response, whether it be in media or here today in estimates, that we have an appreciation and understanding of the difficulties in handling prickly acacia. Certainly that is one of the main reasons why while in Longreach we met with Desert Channels. I am happy to table the correspondence subsequent to that meeting that identifies in some part the matters that were discussed during that meeting. I believe that following that meeting they understood the circumstances that related to the joint release that related to the issue associated with Desert Channels and also the issue associated with the likelihood of the spread of prickly acacia.

Once again, next Wednesday in Canberra I am hoping to get some clarity from the now federal minister about how that money, which I understand is in the federal budget—an allocation of \$5 million—will be spent and in what locations, whether in the seat of Maranoa or in Bob Katter's seat. That will be a matter that the Commonwealth will need to address. Once we can establish that, I am more than happy to work with the Commonwealth government on looking at ways of distributing that funding.

The other matter that the committee should be aware of is the funding through category D in respect of dealing with this particular matter. In doing so, I will ask the Chief Biosecurity Officer, Malcolm Letts, to come to the table to explain how that funding is available. I will table that letter too.

Mr WEIR: I raise a point of order. I believe that the question has been answered. We are taking an extraordinarily long time on every question. I think the question has been answered and we can move on to the next one.

CHAIR: If that has been answered, I believe we can move on. First of all, we have a document here and we will have a look at that. We will come back to that.

Mr PERRETT: My next question is to the director-general. In reference to page 9 of the SDS relating to Biosecurity Queensland's service area objective focusing on continued eradication of imported fire ants, by the end of 2019-20 the department will have spent more than \$134 million of a \$411 million allocation three years into the 10-year eradication plan. Given that the plan has failed to fulfil its first two eradication targets and the problem continues, are you confident that bringing forward funding from future budgets is the right decision?

Dr Woods: In relation to the funding arrangements for the national red imported fire ant, as you have rightly said, member for Gympie, there is a total budget of \$411 million over 10 years, which runs from 2017 to 2027, with all Australian jurisdictions being cost-share partners. You would be aware that there was an original budget which was based on the previous scientific review committee. It was an evenly budgeted budget, so \$41 million a year each year.

The program that it is in place and has geared up is being overseen by a steering committee which represents all of the national partners and with an independent chair, Dr Wendy Craik. The strategy of this program is informed by scientific evidence and by an increasing body of knowledge that supports the optimisation of treatment regimes, bait efficacy and movement controls across the four treatment areas and their outer boundaries.

With your indulgence, I will give an overall view of what the strategy is here. As you start the program and gear up the number of people looking for fire ants on the ground, not surprisingly you find more fire ants quickly. What has become obvious is that there is a risk of fire ants expanding further to the west than was envisaged in the original design by the review committee operating now three years ago. There is also a significant risk of fire ants expanding to the south because fire ants are particularly active in freshly disturbed ground. With the amount of construction that is taking place in the Gold Coast regional council area, there are many areas there that are attractive to fire ants to establish. With the scientific evidence that has been available, the expert advice and under the oversight of the steering committee, the program has identified that there is a real advantage in putting extra resources into looking to halt any further expansion to the west and to ensure that any expansion across the south of the area is also stopped.

We have brought forward funding by agreement between the Queensland government and the Commonwealth government as the two major funding partners. We have increased the effort in that western area in particular but also across the southern extreme of the fire ant area. This is essentially run like a military battle. You aim to stop the incursion at the front and then we will be looking to move the area of infection back towards the coast.

At the end of this year, the first areas will have been subject to a full round of the treatments that are expected to be required for eradication. It is then a further two years beyond that before eradication can be declared. The normal principle in biosecurity is that, having treated whatever the invasive pest or disease is, you then continue to test for another two years to look for eradication.

It is quite true that we have brought extra funds forward. We brought those forward based on the scientific information that was available, on the best evidence of what would be a successful strategy and with the full agreement of the scientific input and program oversight of the national steering committee. At the same time, we are simultaneously looking for more efficient, technology-driven ways to run the remainder of the program so that we look to complete the job. I emphasise that this is a job that has never been done anywhere else in the world, so it is ambitious and we are out on the frontier of a biosecurity response. We think there are genuine opportunities to improve the application of new technologies to this program.

In addition, we are looking at other strategies which will help to bring the program in fully over the 10-year period. There is no sense in which the budget has run away. This has been a fully planned, fully exercised, strategic approach to try to give us the best possible chance of achieving a really good outcome.

To just put a few figures around that, in that western area that I talked about we have 100,000 hectares that has been treated multiple times in less than the two years of treatment, and there are people in the area who are telling us that in paddocks where there were once hundreds or thousands of fire ant nests they can now see none. It is too early to declare success, but at least that is a very promising on-the-ground report from what we have been doing, and we will continue to do it.

Mr FURNER: Through you, Chair, I would like to compliment—

Mr WEIR: I think the question has been well and truly answered.

CHAIR: Be very brief, Minister.

Mr FURNER: As the director-general pointed out, this is a national cost-share initiative. Every other state and territory and the Commonwealth are signed up to this to make sure that we do the best. I want to reference other countries like the USA, where there are fields where children can no longer play and animals have been killed by this pest. Biosecurity Queensland is doing everything within its power including outside of this cost-share initiative. They are also engaging with councils and stakeholders, whether it be to do with earthmoving or property developers, to make sure that we engage with everyone so that they have the best knowledge in determining where there is an infestation of this pest. They are assisting in the process of eradication and they are performing quite well in some areas.

CHAIR: We will go to a question from the member for Mount Ommaney.

Ms PUGH: Following on from your comments about fire ants, Minister, with reference to page 8 of the SDS can the minister please outline what community support and feedback the fire ant program has received?

Mr FURNER: It is important to acknowledge that the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program, as I mentioned earlier, is a national program which Queensland is undertaking on behalf of all Australian jurisdictions. No Australian would want to see fire ants become established in Queensland or anywhere else in Australia. They caused devastation overseas, both at a social level and an agricultural level. To date, the program has been operating eradication efforts on the western boundary. I will shortly enlighten the committee as to why efforts are moving from west to east, but first I would like to highlight some of the positive comments that the program has received.

The RIFA communications team has been conducting telephone surveys of zone 1 post this year's treatment rounds. One respondent from Peak Crossing stated, 'I just want to tell you guys your treatment is working.' Another from Mount Forbes said, 'I want to compliment the program. Blanket treatment was a great idea rather than treating just infested areas. We have never had a problem. You guys were always respectful of livestock and handled everything well. Your treatment is working. We haven't had nests in ages.' 'Keep up the great work,' said a respondent from Mount Walker, whilst a Warrill View resident said, 'Haven't had fire ant nests for a couple of years now. The treatment has worked.' Finally, a respondent from Mutdapilly said, 'I've had a couple of rounds of bait and there was one nest left that I could see. I decided to wait and see what would happen. After the last round I saw that it was dead. Later on, no more nests. The treatment is working.' I would like to thank those landholders as well as every other landholder who engages with the fire ant program. It is clear that biosecurity is everyone's business.

For the benefit of the committee, eradication efforts have begun from the west with the aim of eradication by zone moving east whilst containing the ants as much as possible in the existing boundaries to the north and south. This is not an easy eradication, nor will it be a quick process. There have been nests detected outside of the biosecurity zones and in the future—sadly—there will no doubt be further detections. Where there are detections, they will be destroyed. I also want to clarify for the committee that there have been some delays in nest treatments in non-eradicated areas, and I thank the community for their patience. Work is underway to increase the response to those reports, but the simple answer is that the main thrust of the effort has been in eradication and reducing the areas infested by these ants to prevent them from moving into the suburbs of Brisbane and Ipswich in the coming years.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge other states and territories as well as the Commonwealth for their oversight of this response and the majority of the funding. Queensland has been unique in its ability to contain this pest to a limited geographical area. Queensland is leading the way in the eradication of this pest.

Mr MADDEN: My question is of the minister. Minister, I refer to page 8 of the Service Delivery Statement—Department of Agriculture and Fisheries. Can you advise the committee what steps Biosecurity Queensland is taking to manage cattle tick in Queensland and whether there has been assistance in this management with changes to the registration of properties?

Mr FURNER: As you would know, member for Ipswich West, ticks kill cattle, and vaccination is the only reliable method for the long-term protection of susceptible cattle against tick fever. Queensland is leading the way in the management of cattle tick fever. Earlier this month I visited the Tick Fever Centre at Wacol. This world-class facility is the only producer of tick fever vaccine in Australia. With an increasing demand for the vaccine, the Tick Fever Centre produces approximately 700,000 doses of tick fever vaccine annually. Most of the vaccine is produced and sold to Queensland cattle producers and the remainder to interstate producers and markets in Asia, the Middle East and South America. The Tick Fever Centre is largely self-funded through the sale of vaccine, with the revenue from these sales covering staff salaries and facility operations. The centre was recently approved funding of \$700,000 in the 2019-20 financial year. This will ensure that the facility continues to operate at an optimal level.

Communication is the key to managing and mitigating biosecurity risks and incursions, and my Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has developed and implemented a new biosecurity entity registration portal which is an excellent example of how to keep the community and those potentially affected by biosecurity incursions up to date with the incursion's status and the response. Recently the biosecurity entity registration portal was used to email notifications to neighbouring and nearby properties, informing those registered on the portal of a tick infestation near Chinchilla. This real-time communication tool allows cattle owners to take the necessary steps to minimise their risks and meet their biosecurity obligations.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind all primary producers to get onto the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website and sign up to the biosecurity entity registration portal in order to receive important updates on what is happening with biosecurity management in their region. Livestock owners need to ensure that they are registered as a biosecurity entity and that their contact details are up to date. Currently, entity registration allows cattle owners to be informed not only in the event of a cattle tick infestation in the free zone but also in the event of an emergency, animal disease or pest incident. I also urge members here at estimates to share this information with their constituents. If anyone requires any further information in relation to the biosecurity entity registration portal or biosecurity in general, please contact my office to arrange a briefing.

During estimates last year I agreed to a review of the cattle tick line and to inform the committee of the results of the review. Biosecurity Queensland, in partnership with AgForce, conducted nine seminars which were attended by 310 producers across Queensland from August to October 2018. Following on from that review, I have formed a working group comprising industry representatives and DAF staff to provide advice on the review process and implementation of the guidelines. The working group formed the opinion that an ongoing process for reviewing the cattle tick line would benefit all stakeholders.

The Cattle Tick Surveillance Program is a key component of the biosecurity framework to ensure an effective cattle tick management system is in place. The program can be undertaken anywhere in Queensland to monitor compliance with the act, confirming the presence or absence of cattle ticks and assessing the effects of measures taken to respond to a cattle tick infestation in the free zone. Biosecurity Queensland provides a cattle tick accredited certifier course and undertakes assessment and field competency prior to a person being able to make application for accreditation. Biosecurity is everyone's business, and with the support of the entire industry this system will help protect our primary producers from pests and diseases.

Mr MADDEN: I have another question for the minister. Minister, with reference to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statement, which outlines the great work being done by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries to service rural economic development, can you outline for the committee the current benefits that flow from the Rural Economic Development Grants Scheme, and are there any announcements to be made regarding this program?

Mr FURNER: One of the parts of my portfolio I thoroughly enjoy is calling recipients who have been successful in this grants program and then engaging with them—over the many hundreds of thousands of kilometres that I have travelled—meeting them personally and seeing the good work that this grants program provides primary producers throughout our state. Up to 600 jobs in 15 rural businesses will be created as a result of the projects approved in round 1 of the Palaszczuk government's Rural Economic Development Grants Scheme, which is administered by QRIDA. These grants deliver on the Palaszczuk government's 2017 election commitment to increase jobs and private sector investment in regional Queensland.

As I indicated, I have been privileged to visit a number of businesses to see how these grants will make a real difference to local businesses and increase employment in regional Queensland. Some of the great ideas that the Queensland government is funding include PB Agrifood at Toowoomba, where 11 new workers are expected to be needed with the purchase of a high-tech individual grain colour sorter capable of processing previously subpar grains to meet food standards. I have been very impressed to visit this business on multiple occasions and see their enthusiasm as well as their ongoing innovation that is seeing quality Australian produce exported around the world.

The family owned Pohlmanns Nursery near Gatton has plans in place to build a new state-of-the-art greenhouse designed to maximise productivity and cash in on the growing gap between supply and demand. This will see potentially 40 ongoing jobs eventuate from this investment.

Qualipac in the Lockyer Valley received a RED grant for a state-of-the-art, Queensland-first floretting machine capable of processing otherwise out-of-spec food to a saleable product. I was informed by the brothers that a former agriculture minister—the one Henry Palaszczuk—had previously visited this operation. I am happy to inform the committee that Qualipac is going from strength to strength.

At Greenmount near the home of *Dad and Dave*, Kialla Pure Foods, which produce GMO-free organic products including baking flour, specialty flour and premixes, have also benefited from a RED grant. The funding will be used to upgrade their current blending system by installing a new mixer and packaging system, with the ability for eight jobs to be created. For the benefit of the committee, the products on offer from Kialla Pure Foods are topnotch and the pancake mix should be considered for a Sunday morning breakfast with jam and cream.

At Dalby, where the workshops have now become too small, one of the world's widest crop-harvesting platform manufacturers is set to double production and create up to two dozen jobs from the RED grant. Midwest Fabrication manufacture 60-foot platforms, and the grant will assist in expanding their current workshop so they can safely and efficiently manufacture larger numbers of their 60-foot draper platforms.

Kool Country Packers, who are Ballandean based, will use their RED grant to purchase and install innovative technology that will improve the overall production of their business and create new job opportunities. A new tomato recognition system will potentially provide year-round employment for current workers and create 30 new direct and indirect positions after installation. The manager highlighted that this innovation would allow Kool Country Packers to keep up with consumer trends and increase their daily throughput.

This is just some of the great work the 15 businesses of round 1 will accomplish through the RED Grants program. These grants are helping vital rural industries to expand and thrive, creating the regional jobs we know are required in those areas now and into the future. Today I would like to also announce that the second round of RED Grants will be open. I am certain that, like the previous round, there will be a great degree of enthusiasm out there in the agriculture sector as they look at the opportunity to apply for these grants. Information will be available on the website. I encourage the committee to inform their constituents of this second round. I look forward to visiting the innovative businesses that will benefit from the second round and seeing the growth in employment that will advantage regional Queensland.

CHAIR: Page 4 of the SDS says that DAF 'works with agri-businesses to increase their capacity to respond to production risks'. Minister, will you outline the current assistance the state government is providing in the aftermath of the strawberry tampering incidents?

Mr FURNER: I thank the chair for the question. This is certainly a matter that has been assisted and accepted widely by the horticultural industry as well as the strawberry industry. As you would recall, it happened to the Queensland strawberry industry. It was certainly disappointing and was very deliberate. I would like to begin by acknowledging the engagement of the media, specifically the ABC and particularly Craig Zonca from ABC Radio for his encouragement and enthusiasm in supporting this industry to get back on its feet, as well as the positive response through the *Courier-Mail* in promoting strawberries after the tampering incident.

As the committee is well aware, in December 2018, following verified reports of tampering of strawberries with needles, retailers removed three brands of strawberries from the market. Queensland Health led the whole-of-government response to those incidents, working closely with the Queensland police. The Queensland Police Service had more than 100 staff assigned to this incident, and the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier and Minister for Trade, approved a \$100,000 reward for information leading to an arrest.

In November 2018, the QPS did arrest and charge a person with seven counts of contamination of goods under the Criminal Code, which has a three-year maximum penalty. A circumstance of aggravation has also been alleged, elevating the maximum penalty to 10 years imprisonment. On 12 November 2018, Ms Trinh appeared in the Brisbane Magistrates Court to face these charges. I will not comment further on the individual, but I again congratulate the police on their responses and actions in this incident.

Since the tampering crisis began, my department has worked closely with the strawberry industry through a Back to Market Working Group to assist with industry recovery. Soon after the event, I visited a number of strawberry farms and attended an information night on the Sunshine Coast with industry, the police, QRIDA and the Chief Health Officer. I must put on record my thanks to the member for Glass House for his attendance at that meeting of over 100 producers in that area. We have also regularly met with the president of the strawberry association, Mr Luigi Coco. I would like to place on record my thanks to Mr Coco and his staff for his and the other industry bodies' engagement with the response. I also acknowledge that the opposition received a briefing on this response.

CHAIR: We will go to the opposition for questions.

Mr PERRETT: My question is to the director-general. In reference to page 27 of the SDS relating to the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges service summary, I refer to the Coaldrake review into the Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College. What remuneration did Peter Coaldrake receive for this review?

Dr Woods: I will refer that question to the deputy director-general of agriculture to provide the response.

Ms Ditchfield: The procurement process was undertaken by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, so unfortunately I do not have that level of detail to hand. Certainly, we can try and source that information within the time or outside of the time.

CHAIR: We will come back to that.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, I refer to the Coaldrake review into the Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College. Is the minister aware that Peter Coaldrake made a personal donation of \$1,760 to the Queensland Labor Party two weeks before delivering his final report on the agricultural colleges?

CHAIR: Can I just point out that we are examining the future expenditure? I said this during the last section. Let us not trawl over what has been done in the past. Member for Gympie, do you want to connect this to the future expenditure or the expenditure that is currently under review?

Mr PERRETT: Can you repeat that, Chair?

CHAIR: Bear in mind that, under standing order 181(g), this has to be connected to the examination of the current expenditure. Can you connect this with the current expenditure?

Mr PERRETT: It is page 27 of the SDS relating to the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges service summary.

CHAIR: Your question was about a political donation, was it not?

Mr PERRETT: Prior to the delivery of a report on both the Longreach and Emerald colleges.

CHAIR: You are going to get yourself into difficulties with this. You have to show us how this connects with the examination of expenditure.

Mr FURNER: Chair, I am able to assist the committee if that is suitable.

CHAIR: Would you like to direct your question to the minister?

Mr PERRETT: The question was directed to the minister.

CHAIR: Good.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question.

CHAIR: I will allow some latitude with this one.

Mr FURNER: In answer to the member's first part of the question with respect to Mr Peter Coaldrake, I am certainly not familiar with that being the case. This is a matter that has been well ventilated both in the media and by the LNP in the past. Those opposite have been quite disingenuous on this matter with respect to the facts. It is important that we put that on record.

In 2018, 25 students commenced at Longreach and 48 in Emerald, down from 37 and 85 respectively two years earlier. Both campuses have the capacity to accommodate over 150 students, but declining residential student enrolments have significantly contributed to QATC reporting and operating a loss of \$5.4 million for 2017-18. In 2018, as an example, QATC undertook an extensive marketing campaign with a view to increasing student enrolments from the 2019 intake.

Mr MICKELBERG: Point of order, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: What is your point of order?

Mr MICKELBERG: It is standing order 118, relevance. The question was in relation to the minister's knowledge of a political donation of \$1,760 to the Queensland Labor Party by an individual who conducted a review into Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Buderim. As I said before, I think I could have ruled that question entirely out of order, but the minister wants to take it and I have given him—

Mr MICKELBERG: On what basis?

Ms PUGH: It has nothing to do with the SDS or budget papers.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, member for Mount Ommaney. As far as I could see, it has very tenuous links, under standing order 181(g), to the examination of the budget. As I said, the minister is answering this with a degree of latitude. I have allowed this one through. I invite him to continue on with this particular question.

Mr FURNER: Once again, as a government we are doing everything possible to make sure we sustain the viability of this college. One example was the marketing expenditure of \$277,098, bringing the total expenditure on marketing to increase enrolments over the past two financial years to \$610,276.

As a result of declining student numbers and successive deficits, Professor Peter Coaldrake was engaged to review the vocational education, training and skills sector in Central West Queensland including QATC. The review identified that the residential based training model was no longer viable and that the transitioning of the facilities at Emerald and Longreach to alternative uses would deliver greater value for those communities. The decision made by the Palaszczuk government was not taken lightly as it impacts QATC operations across the state. That is why 12 months notice was given: to provide staff, students and those communities with time to transition into a new future. That is why this government appointed the well-known and respected industry figure and former AgForce CEO, Charles Burke, to lead a PMO. Alison Mobbs has been appointed to the director position and is based in Longreach.

Mr WEIR: Point of order. Like I stated earlier, the length of those responses is a little bit extreme. I think the minister has answered the question. I think we can move on.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Condamine. I am sure the minister will be arriving at the end of his answer very soon.

Mr FURNER: I am thank you, Chair. Those opposite have made many comments on the QATC without seeking a briefing on the facts and without releasing their very own report on the QATC that they prepared whilst they were in government. It is about time the member for Gympie tabled that report they sought while they were in government.

CHAIR: A further question?

Mr PERRETT: I refer to the Coaldrake review into Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College. Now that the minister is aware that Peter Coaldrake made a personal donation to the Labor Party of \$1,760 weeks before delivering his final report—

Mr FURNER: Point of order, Chair.

Mr PERRETT:—on agricultural colleges, will the minister consult the Integrity Commissioner—

CHAIR: Wait, member for Gympie. What is the point of order, Minister?

Mr FURNER: At no stage in my response did I alert the committee to any awareness of any contribution or donation made by Peter Coaldrake to the Labor Party. Once again, the member for Gympie is misleading this committee and also this estimates hearing.

Mr PERRETT: I made you aware, Minister.

CHAIR: Wait. Order! Member for Gympie, do you want to start again without possibly offending standing orders regarding imputations or hypotheticals?

Mr PERRETT: Will the minister consult the Integrity Commissioner about a potential conflict of interest?

Mr FURNER: I have recently consulted the Integrity Commissioner, Chair, so I am not certain what the member for Gympie is alluding to.

Mr PERRETT: The chair is going to rule it out of order obviously, so I—

CHAIR: I will wait and see where you are going with this.

Mr PERRETT: Now that the minister is aware that a personal donation was made, will he consult the Integrity Commissioner about a potential conflict of interest?

Mr FURNER: Once again, Chair—

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, I have counselled you on making this relevant to the examination of the budget. I have given you a fair bit of latitude for this one. Under standing order 181(g) I could quite easily rule that out of order. I think, Minister, you have answered this from what I understood of your answer; am I correct?

Mr FURNER: I have already answered this, Chair.

CHAIR: Do you want to move on to another question, member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, can you advise the committee which section of the budget papers outlines the funding for the Project Management Office working with the Longreach and Emerald communities, the relationship this group has with the interdepartmental committee overseeing the transition and when a resolution is expected?

Dr Woods: I thank the member for the question. The Project Management Office for the QATC transition is located within the agriculture business group of the department. The responsibility for this transition is in partnership with the board and the acting CEO of QATC. There are effectively two parts of the transition process. One is ensuring that students and staff who are already with the college are adequately dealt with in terms of allowing students to complete their programs and working with staff to either transition them to future roles in future training organisations or to other future roles in their own careers. That part of the work is being managed by the acting CEO of QATC under the guidance of the QATC board. There is also the piece of work that is about what happens after the closing of the QATC in its existing form at the end of the year that the Minister and Minister Fentiman announced. That transition process is led by Mr Burke in the Project Management Office within the agriculture business group.

CHAIR: Further questions?

Mr PERRETT: Yes, Mr Chair. Director-General, in reference to page 27 of the SDS in relation to the QATC staffing and the estimates question on notice No. 18 that asks questions around the payout and transition of QATC staff, given that only two staff have been provided new jobs, does the department have a target of the number of staff who will be provided new jobs?

Dr Woods: Questions of the future of staff of the Queensland Agricultural Training Colleges perhaps are more properly directed towards the CEO of QATC. However, your question specifically asked: did the department have a target for the future jobs of staff involved? It would be our intention to assist every staff member to come up with a satisfactory outcome for their individual circumstances, bearing in mind that there may be members of staff who, for example, wish to retire at this point rather than seek employment with another organisation. The current Employment Assistance Scheme, which has been supported by government funding and which is being led by the acting CEO of QATC, is working with all staff who are employees of the college.

Mr PERRETT: Given that there were 107 staff employed by QATC in 2018-19, projected to be zero in this budget, can the minister clarify how much will be paid out in these staff losses and how many will be offered new jobs in the Queensland government?

Mr FURNER: Certainly, there are a number of aspects to the question. First, as part of the staff transition plan in place there is an employee assistance scheme for staff affected by the wind-down of the QATC entity. This includes up to \$5,000 per employee for job search support, skills support as well as special leave and travel assistance. In total, up to \$500,000 is available to all eligible staff employed by QATC to help secure new jobs and find local employment elsewhere in their communities.

Certainly, the Palaszczuk government recognises that the Longreach Pastoral College and the Emerald Agricultural College are valued long-term community assets. The PMO is working with those stakeholders, through the local community stakeholder committees formed in Longreach and Emerald, to develop an economic transition strategy for the future use of these services. I refer to the Acting Chief Executive Officer of QATC, Mr Craig Mathisen, for further detail on your questions.

Mr Mathisen: I would like to answer the question in two parts. I will first provide information on staff numbers. QATC's workforce consists of a combination of permanent, temporary, casual staff and contractors to meet the changing needs of its service delivery across the state at all its sites. Changes in numbers of staff are expected throughout the year and are normal.

Following the release of the Coaldrake review, the closure announcement provided 12 months notice to all staff to transition to new employment opportunities. As at 1 July 2019, 10 staff have resigned to take up new employment. Of those 10 staff who resigned, three were permanent employees out of a total of 46 permanent staff. Nine of those new jobs are in regional Queensland and one position is at a university in Brisbane due to family relocation. Three of those new jobs are with Queensland government departments. Zero permanent staff have been made redundant or are on redeployment at this stage. Some 15 temporary or casual staff or contractors left QATC at the completion of their contract. Six staff have exited for operational reasons such as failure to meet the criteria for the reissuing of a blue card, which is a mandatory requirement for QATC employment. Zero courses have been delayed or postponed due to the unavailability of staff and maintaining a commitment to teach out in 2019.

As part of staff transition, the QATC executive leadership team has led the transition process as a high priority and has had regular engagement and communication with staff, starting with an all-staff teleconference the day after the announcement. To assist staff with transition to other employment—and as mentioned by the director-general and the minister—the intent is to help staff transition to new employment opportunities. We have run four workshops across the state to help and enable staff to access training sessions to deal with change. We have an employment assistance program implemented for all staff who are employed, irrespective of whether they are permanent, temporary or casual. All staff are eligible for up to \$5,000 assistance for retraining, reskilling and travel related costs. Specialist employment placement consultants have been engaged to provide one-on-one advice to all staff on career pathways and to update their resume and interview processes. In addition, workshops have been held in Longreach, Townsville, Emerald and Toowoomba.

Mr PERRETT: Continuing on the topic of agricultural education and workforce, in October 2018 the state government requested the government funded, industrial-led Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance, which boasts members like the Queensland Farmers' Federation, AgForce, Cotton Australia, TABMA, Irrigation Australia and the Nursery & Garden Industry Queensland, to report on industry training and workforce planning issues to provide a pathway for government to deliver innovative, effective policy for the sector. Minister, can you minister advise the committee what action the department has taken in response to that commissioned report? What advice from this industry approved plan has the minister initiated or planned to initiate?

Mr FURNER: There is \$3 million over three years to help industry continue through our Rural Jobs and Skills Alliance and the Queensland Agricultural Workforce Network. Some time ago I was privileged to attend Gympie State High School in the electorate of Gympie to see the good, valuable work of those students. As well, I am very fortunate, along with some other members on the committee and in this parliament, to have an agricultural curriculum in one of my schools, Ferny Grove State High School. We do value the commitment in terms of agricultural education in our schools. That is why additional funding has been provided—\$3 million over three years—to help that industry continue the jobs and skills alliances through those networks. Certainly, those initiatives were established as a result of the 2015 election commitment and have been very successful in supporting the state's agricultural industry in its efforts to attract but also develop and retain those skilled workers and seasonal labourers.

Ms PUGH: With reference to SDS page 4 with regard to DAF working with producers, industry and all levels of government to capitalise on rural opportunities, improve supply chains and create long-term jobs for the benefit of Queensland's food and fibre sector, can the minister please outline how the #eatqld campaign is achieving these objectives?

Mr FURNER: It is a great initiative. We are seeing many parts of the agricultural industry get on board with this easy, accessible initiative. Certainly, Queenslanders look out for each other. We watch each other's backs. That is why it is important that we back our farmers. I know that everyone on this committee would be of the same view and hold the values that I do in terms of backing our agricultural sector.

We are backing our farmers with sensible fines for protesters who breach biosecurity on farms and in processing facilities. That is why we have invested more than \$670 million in drought-affected regions to support farmers, jobs and communities. Five new shires and parts of four more have now been drought-declared following primary producer eligibility for assistance.

I have launched the #eatqld campaign to urge all Queenslanders to support farmers by buying locally grown produce to support jobs in those regions. The #eatqld campaign is a celebration of everything that is great about Queensland produce. It is the delicious fresh fruit, salad greens, nuts, seafood, beef, lamb and pork. These are just some of these great fresh foods that we produce in this state, but it represents so much more than that. I particularly pleased with the foundation of #eatqld partners—that is, Woolworths, Clubs Queensland, RNA, Eat Street Northshore to mention just a few. JBS and various local shires have also come on board. Just the other night the member for Gregory and I attended a Central Highlands dinner. Everyone was on their iPhones taking photos, hashtagging and putting it on social media, be it Instagram or Facebook, and celebrating Queensland produce. We had expressions of support from local governments and agricultural industry groups, major meat processors and regional food organisations. We are sharing those ideas of support for Queensland producers and the great things they produce.

#eatqld is encouragement for every Queenslander to back our farmers by buying their great produce. The simple best thing every Queenslander can do to support a farmer is to favour Queensland produce at every opportunity. That means real and tangible support to our farmers. It means jobs for our rural communities. It also means celebrating what is healthy and good about our state—from the farm gate to the restaurant plate and exports to all parts of the globe. It supports jobs on farms. It supports jobs in our restaurants and supermarkets. It supports jobs in transport and processing, all the way through the supply chain. This is a campaign that every true Queenslander can get behind and say proudly, 'I'm supporting Queensland fishers and farmers.' That is what the Palaszczuk government does every day and that is what we will continue to do.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, with reference to the Service Delivery Statements at page 33 with regard to QRIDA providing management of the compulsory Farm Business Debt Mediation program—which I understand was one of the recommendations of the Rural Debt and Drought Taskforce—that provides a process for the efficient and equitable resolution of farm debt disputes, will the minister outline the current engagement and outcomes of this program?

Mr FURNER: The Farm Business Debt Mediation Act 2017 came into effect on 1 July 2017. It is important to acknowledge that Dale Last engaged with a prior agricultural minister on this legislation. It was welcome, it was open and it was useful engagement to ensure that the legislation met the needs of Queensland's primary industries. As a result of that legislation, the Farm Business Debt Mediation program was introduced and is administered by QRIDA. This program requires farmers and lenders to enter into mandatory mediation at the time of mortgage enforcement action being initiated by their lenders. Costs of the mediation process are shared equally by the farmer and the lender.

Since 1 July 2017 the program has seen 145 mediation matters commenced and 105 mediation matters finalised or withdrawn. Of these, seven were farm initiated mediations, eight internal reviews received were all upheld, 39 mediators were accredited and published on the register of mediators and one matter is still subject to a judicial review outcome in the Supreme Court. In 2018-19, 73 mediation matters commenced with 43 matters overall still in progress and 30 finalised. In accordance with the legislation, QRIDA is reviewing the existing panel of mediators, with all existing mediators to seek reaccreditation. QRIDA is committed to robust information barriers between the administration of this program and the delivery of core QRIDA loans and grant programs.

Since the commencement of the program, an internal audit of the Farm Business Debt Mediation program has been conducted which has confirmed that there are sufficient internal controls in place to ensure the confidentiality of the program. It is a great program and I commend QRIDA for its administration. It is important that Queensland producers have access to support as provided by this program while they are going through difficult financial and sometimes personal circumstances. I encourage the committee to inform their constituents who may need to utilise this service that they can contact QRIDA on free call 1800623946.

CHAIR: Minister, I have one brief question and we will get a brief answer because the members for Traeger and Mirani are keen to ask you a question and they have travelled a long way. With reference to the SDS at page 5 with regard to DAF developing a strategy for agribusiness and food industry development to encourage employment growth and private sector investment, can you outline what this strategy will entail?

Mr FURNER: I recently launched the Growing for Queensland discussion paper at the RMAC stakeholder breakfast in Toowoomba to start a conversation with the community and stakeholders about the future of agribusinesses and the food sector. This discussion paper builds on many government strategies and programs that provide direction and support to Queensland's agricultural

sector and the Palaszczuk government has a range of initiatives, programs and policies in place to support the growth of the sector and jobs in rural and regional Queensland. These include drought and disaster assistance, rural economic development grants, farm management grants, farm business debt mediation services, the Business Energy Savers Program, the Rural Jobs & Skills Alliance, the Jobs and Regional Growth Fund, the Growing Queensland's Food Exports Program, maintaining the resilience of Queensland's biosecurity system through the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy, research and innovation to underpin development in the sector and other programs under the Advance Queensland initiative including the Advancing Regional Innovation Program and the Advance Queensland Industry Attraction Fund.

The sector has a strong culture of continuous improvement and adapting to remain productive and profitable under changing conditions. Growing demand for food and fibre and the need to take action on climate change will drive further innovation. These challenges are opportunities for growth. The purpose of the agribusiness and food strategy is to identify key opportunities to grow a trusted, profitable and sustainable sector that is ready to meet the challenges and the opportunities of the future.

The Growing for Queensland discussion paper provides an opportunity to engage with stakeholders and the community in the development of this strategy. Industry stakeholders have welcomed the development of this strategy and the release of the discussion paper and industry bodies have engaged throughout the consultation period through a variety of means such as through AgMAC, an industry focused workshop, regional stakeholder workshops and a range of agribusiness food sector leaders and innovators including Queensland's Chief Scientist and Chief Entrepreneur participating in the process as a panel of critical friends. They will inject fresh ideas, new thinking, real-world experience and the latest insights. I look forward to continuing their engagement on the work in this sector in the community to ensure that our transition to the future is fair, just and sustainable. I seek leave to table a copy of that discussion paper as well.

CHAIR: We can table a copy of that.

Mr FURNER: I understand my director-general has an answer to the question on the cost of the Coaldrake report.

Dr Woods: In relation to the question of the payment to Emeritus Professor Peter Coaldrake, as previously explained, he was engaged through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. The officers of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet have advised that Professor Coaldrake was paid \$61,600, including GST, for his work and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries provided in-kind support throughout the development of that report.

CHAIR: Thank you. The member for Mirani has been keen to ask a question and, as I said, he has travelled a long way.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you, Chair. With the reassignment of the agricultural colleges—I did my time with the fisheries myself—where are we going forward in terms of people with regard to fisheries agriculture? With regard to the farming side of it, who is going to train these people? I am really struggling to work out where we are going forward with that. Where are we going and how are we going to train these people?

Mr FURNER: I certainly thank the member for his question and am happy to explain some further detail following on from the member for Gympie's question about rural jobs initiatives in terms of training through our schools and our Rural Jobs & Skills Alliance. Once again, as I said before you entered the room, there is \$3 million over three years to assist in that ongoing training and assistance. Furthermore, QATC is just one of a number of RTOs that are out there. One of the decisions made through the Coaldrake report was about the type of training and the curriculum. However, to a great extent the delivery was outdated. RTOs, registered training organisations, are already approved to deliver the same competency based training across-the-board and programs in Queensland. That is one of the reasons why we are looking at establishing that commitment of \$7 million in funding a new TAFE at Toowoomba, as an example.

Overall, there is \$30 million to modernise and reinvigorate vocational training right across the state's central west. There is adequate funding that this government has committed to ensure that we capture people, whether they be students or mature age students wanting to pick up a new skill or a new job in agriculture. It is important that the government invests in that. That is what we are doing through our commitment not only in this budget but also in the past with respect to what we provide for training across the board.

We are working closely with the DESBT to provide for future training that meets industry priorities. That is why Minister Fentiman came to Longreach last December—to make the announcement regarding the QATC.

Mr ANDREW: There are 950,000 people, or 19 per cent of the five million people in Queensland, who have just been recognised as being recreational fishermen. Most of the 340 fishermen who are there are under extreme duress. Their lives are in our hands at the moment because of the pressure that has been put on them. I am worried about how we are going to stop the black marketeering with the 950,000 people who have been identified—

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, before you go on, Fisheries is next. Did you want to follow up anything on agriculture? I will come back to you. We will go to the member for Traeger.

Mr ANDREW: Yes, do that.

Mr KATTER: Minister, I refer to page 33 of the SDS. A few dozen primary producers located in the Charter Towers and Etheridge shire council areas, despite receiving some of the worst localised flooding in recorded history and incurring crippling costs, are ineligible for vital assistance grants due to the rigid and inequitable category C disaster assistance criteria. Can you minister please advise what efforts you and your department have made to ensure that these victims are treated equitably?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Traeger for his question. The member for Gympie and I inspected those areas and went back into those regions several times. What we saw—no doubt you would have also seen it—will be with us for the rest of our lives. The effects on those farmers, their properties and their animals will be everlasting.

The assistance that has been activated under the Commonwealth-state disaster funding program includes category B, concessional loans and freight subsidies; category C, clean-up and recovery grants; and for the north-west gulf region, a category D, north-west beef recovery package. For that event, recovery grants for primary producers of up to \$75,000 for a streamlined assessment and approval process have been introduced. QRIDA administers those grants, with the grants open for six months, until 9 August this year.

Category C grants can be used for a range of clean-up and recovery activities—for example, repairing fences but also repairing the fields and maintaining livestock, clean-up and repair of damaged property and equipment. Due to the severity of the monsoonal flooding event, QRIDA is also administering the \$300 million grants scheme on behalf of the federal government to assist those producers with restocking, replanting and on-field infrastructure.

Under the scheme, primary producers in areas activated for category C are able to obtain grants of up to \$400,000 to support restocking, replanting or the repair of on-farm infrastructure. Producers can also seek IDP—individual droughted property—assistance as well as declarations that are outside of the zones. For further clarity, I might refer to my director-general, Beth Woods, on this matter.

Dr Woods: In relation to the member's question, which was about individuals in Etheridge and Charters Towers in particular who do not meet the category C criteria, it is important to understand that the schemes that are at the category C and category D levels are community recovery schemes. They require the damage to meet a threshold in the well-established Commonwealth-state arrangements, for the extent of damage across the entire community, that is the community recovery threshold that then brings into play the ability for individuals to apply.

It is an unfortunate reality of any scheme that there will be individuals who are badly affected in an area where the overall community impact does not meet this threshold. That is the case for this disaster. Unfortunately, it is the case in many disasters that we have the odd producer who is very severely impacted. That is the purpose, as the minister has already pointed out, of the individual disaster-stricken producer process. I recognise, however, that that only allows people to access category B level assistance.

Mr KATTER: That is a very good answer. I have had that response before, but I am happy for the committee to hear it again. Is there going to be an effort to include those ones who missed out on the category C assistance in some equitable form of assistance that would be commensurate with those people who did receive the category C assistance?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. I was impressed with the combined effort of local government and the state and Commonwealth governments working together on this terrible disaster. Any negotiation or consideration about access to entitlements through the category would be a matter for both the Commonwealth and the state to reconsider. That is outside my purview as agriculture minister but, certainly, we will monitor the rollout.

As you would appreciate, it will take years for those primary producers to recover. Last Thursday I was talking to the CEO of AAcco. He is seeing cattle come across from the Northern Territory in terms of the ability for them to graze on his pastures as a result of the tail end of the monsoonal event. It is important that we make sure that we engage with primary producers and other governments responsible for this initiative now as a learning curve as a result of that particular natural disaster. I understand that my director-general might have some additional comments to make on your question.

CHAIR: Just briefly before we go back—

Dr Woods: As a department we always conduct a debriefing after each of these processes. We feed through to both the portfolio in the Queensland government and the relevant minister in the Commonwealth our experience of the limitations of the current application process. The problem of individuals who are badly affected in areas that do not meet community thresholds is a problem that we have been feeding back into the system for some years now, but it is not an easy one to solve.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, you get to wind the session up.

Mr ANDREW: I have just been over to Vanuatu. As to the agricultural side of things, we have issues with being able to bring people here—not like in the old days, obviously. I would like to have a talk to you about being able to express that situation, or make that clearer so that we can get with the Vanuatu government to make it easier for those people off Ambae, who were in the disaster with their community with the Monaro volcano, to be able to access and support Queensland farmers in certain ways and be able to come here to bolster their community and also bolster the Queensland community. Do you have a way forward with that? I know that the Speaker and I have worked together on this.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. No doubt a lot of that fits within the responsibilities and jurisdiction of the Commonwealth government. You were not in the room when I spoke earlier about going to Canberra next Wednesday. I am happy to organise a briefing, if at all possible, for you before then with my office to get some further details about what you are seeking in those discussions with Commonwealth representatives next Wednesday in Canberra.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: We have four documents that we need to table: the amended question 15; a letter from Desert Channels; a letter from Minister Furner; and the *Growing for Queensland* document. So tabled? So tabled. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 5.45 with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio area of Fisheries.

Proceedings suspended from 5.30 pm to 5.45 pm.



CHAIR: Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Fisheries. Minister, if you would like to make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair. I thank the committee once again for allowing me to make an opening statement. It is an exciting time to be the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries—in particular the minister for fisheries. In 2017 our government laid out its decade-long vision to reform and improve the management of Queensland's fish stocks. That vision is underpinned by \$20 million in new funding through the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. That strategy was itself the product of an intensive consultative process building on issues identified and the need for urgent action under the previous Newman government. Doing nothing was not an option. I am proud to say the government is delivering upon a bold plan of action outlined in that strategy.

We are putting in \$10.8 million of new money over the next two years out of this budget and continuing our investment in the future of our fisheries and fishing industry. We are making significant progress on every front of our fisheries reform agenda and we are doing so in consultation with the industry and recreational fishers, traditional owners and the broader community. We have continued investment in our fisheries reforms program, matching our legislation and operational policy commitments with new money. Just today new recruits were sworn in as Fisheries patrol officers who are committed to serving the people of Queensland.

We are supporting swimmer safety through continued investment in the Shark Control Program and we will work with the community to deliver swimmer safety while advancing our unique research agenda into shark behaviour. Our government recognises the support and good work that our public servants in the Boating and Fisheries Patrol and contractors and support staff carry out across Queensland. We are working with industry bodies on initiatives like #eatqld to grow our industry, economy and flavour profile. We are the only party in government that invests in jobs and regional economies. That was the case in the last election, it is the case now and it is the case going forward.

We recognise the role fisheries and also forestry plays in the regional economies and culture across Queensland. We will work with those communities as we move forward and we will continue to deliver a sustainable legacy. In doing so we are also bringing online new and exciting opportunities for growth in regional economies. At the start of my term I saw the potential that aquaculture presented to Queensland. I am proud to say that with the support of our government we are making aquaculture boom in regional Queensland. We are seeing jobs in the private sector and investment flow from regional Queensland under our government. Global and domestic demand for aquatic protein is growing and my government and I are making sure that Queensland is well positioned to take advantage of that. It is another boon for our seafood industry complementing the great work our wild-caught sector provides.

In terms of forestry, we will continue to work with the timber production sector to support local jobs and productivity initiatives while meeting public expectations for sustainability. New sale permits have come onto the market and it has been pleasing to see our government co-invest in projects in regional hubs like Maryborough to support innovation in the industry. I will continue to work through my election commitments in consultation with the industry and the community. These are the challenges ahead but we are well placed to work through them together.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge the service provided to this committee, the department and the people of Queensland by Mr Scott Spencer. Scott retired from his position as deputy director-general last year. He leaves a long career of public service, having previously served as chair of SunWater and director-general of natural resources among other distinguished roles. Scott has served a long line of ministers across successive governments and provided thoughtful and considered advice. I am pleased that he is continuing his involvement in fisheries as a newly appointed board member of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority. I wish him well in his new role. Thank you.

CHAIR: We will now commence questions. I call the member for Gympie.

Mr PERRETT: In reference to page 12 of the SDS relating to the responsibility of managing Queensland's Shark Control Program, why hasn't the Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group met since November 2018?

Dr Woods: We will have to look for the detail of the meeting dates for that committee. Minister, I think with your agreement we will need to take that on notice at this point and come back to it. I beg your pardon, my understanding is that, in fact, it has met twice this year. I will get you the detailed dates and we will take that on notice.

Mr PERRETT: If they have met twice, why have the minutes not been put online?

Dr Woods: Again, I will seek an answer to that and come back to you.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, are tiger, bull and white sharks that are caught on drum lines currently being tagged and released in Queensland? If so, how many in 2018-19?

CHAIR: I have said it before, but can we please relate that to future expenditure as well?

Dr Woods: The current program is that, in general, we do not release any shark that is a potential threat to human health. From 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, 557 sharks were caught in program apparatus. Can I check with you which species you were particularly interested in?

Mr PERRETT: All species that are caught.

Dr Woods: I will run through the species that were caught in the 2018-19 financial year: tiger sharks 207, bull sharks 115, white sharks 12, other target sharks 106 and 117 sharks of non-target species. Of those, the ones that we attempt to release alive are the non-target sharks, and 36 of the 117 were released alive.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, in 2018-19 how many sharks captured on drum lines were attended to within 24 hours?

Mr FURNER: I will refer to the Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry, Graeme Bolton.

Mr Bolton: Under the current contract, the Shark Control Program contractors are required to attend the shark apparatus every second day. They do not attend every day. We do random checks through the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol to ensure they are doing that.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, can you clarify which non-lethal shark control programs are being investigated and trialled? Where in the world have those technologies been successfully implemented?

Mr FURNER: The member would most likely be aware of the success of this program since 1962. It has been well served throughout Queensland since that period. Our nets and our drum lines are on 86 locations along the seaboard, from the Gold Coast to Cairns. As part of the recent Palaszczuk

government budget, \$17.1 million is committed over four years, which is \$4.4 million on an annual basis, to examine the changes in and also possibilities of new technologies in regard to those program initiatives. The funding will continue the operation and maintenance of the Shark Control Program, while investing \$1 million a year in research and new technologies.

I have been personally engaged with the shark program committee. I have heard from them firsthand about some of the initiatives that apply in other states. At this point in time, I am not convinced that the current technologies in place are adequate in terms of looking at their implementation in Queensland. On that note, I will refer to Deputy Director-General Graeme Bolton to further explain the possibilities of other technologies that might be out there, beyond the states that I have been informed about through that particular committee.

Mr Bolton: The shark expert panel met about six weeks ago. We will get the exact date for you. I attended the meeting. The shark panel is made up of various experts from around the country, including from other jurisdictions. As part of that particular program we were looking at what is coming up in terms of the technology being used in other parts of Australia, including Western Australia, and South Africa. They include barriers, both physical and acoustic. We are looking at the use of drones and other technologies that might be used to alert people to the fact that sharks are in the area. Currently we have an expert report being prepared by Cardno, a leading environmental expert in this particular field. They are going to make further recommendations to the shark expert panel, which will consider the various options and then make recommendations about what the \$1 million trial program will focus on in the near future.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to tiger, bull and white sharks and the numbers that you gave before. How many of those sharks were actually caught in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park? Of those, how many were released there? Do you have a figure on how many were over two metres?

Dr Woods: We will have to seek those details. With the minister's permission, we will take that on notice.

CHAIR: We will come back to that. That was a question about the location?

Mr PERRETT: Yes, in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and the numbers.

Mr ANDREW: I have a question relating to that same issue.

CHAIR: We will come back to you on that one. If the question is related to that, I think it is a good way to go.

Mr PERRETT: In reference to page 12 of the SDS relating to the responsibility of managing and reforming Queensland's fisheries sector, the department's website lists the sustainability of various Queensland fisheries, including mud crabs. The site states that mud crabs, both in the gulf and on the east coast, have been at a sustainable level for the past five years. Director-General, will you confirm that that information is correct and outline what your department uses as a basis for its policies around mud crab take?

Dr Woods: I will refer that question to the Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry, Mr Graeme Bolton.

Mr Bolton: In regard to the sustainability of Queensland fish stocks, Fisheries Queensland assesses 67 out of the 98 stocks every two years. Eight Queensland fish stocks are currently considered to have sustainability concerns. That represents an increase of two stocks since 2016, being spanner crab and grey morwong. Three stocks are considered to be depleted: snapper, saucer scallops and pearl perch. A further three stocks are considered to be depleting: spanner crab, king threadfin in the Gulf of Carpentaria and barramundi in the Gulf of Carpentaria. In terms of the information that is on the website, we can confirm that that is the correct information.

Mr PERRETT: I have a follow-up question to the minister. You have heard from the department about the accuracy of its fisheries data on its website and that that this is used as a basis for policy progression. On 24 June on the ABC's *Queensland County Hour* program you said that mud crab numbers are in dire straits—using this as a reason for the reduction in permissible mud crab take. Can you please advise the committee what evidence was used to come to this conclusion and whether this information was used instead of the department's own data?

CHAIR: I will say it again. You are obviously talking about what has been said there. Can you relate that to the expenditure of funds? Can you add to that member for Gympie in terms of relating that to future budget expenditure?

Mr PERRETT: It relates to page 12 of the SDS—managing and reforming Queensland’s fisheries sector?

CHAIR: No worries.

Mr FURNER: Most likely—I cannot recall every press interview I do; I do many—certainly fisheries is one—

Mr MICKELBERG: You did a good one yesterday.

CHAIR: Through the chair please, member for Buderim.

Mr FURNER: I will disregard that childish comment. That is what you get from some members of the LNP. One day they might grow up.

Fisheries is an important sector for not only Queensland but also the world and certainly not just important for commercial fishers but also for recreational fishers and charter fishers involved in the sector. In the past I was fortunate to go out on the water—as was my deputy director-general for agriculture who was acting deputy director-general for fisheries at the time—out from Maryborough with a crab fisher. I got a complete understanding of the crucial nature of mud crabs and the industry as a whole.

Black marketing is a widespread issue. That is why we are cracking down on black marketing. Stock levels are not the only reason we implement reforms. We implement reforms based on the knowledge of people like expert crabbers—people like the gentleman whose boat I went out on for four hours—and the expert panel that provides information to my department on particular species, whether it be mud crabs, spanner crabs or whatever the case might be.

That is why we are cracking down on black marketing in our reforms and changes to the Fisheries Act, which I know you, Mr Chair, spoke about in the chamber when they were being debated. That is why we make no excuses for cracking down on black marketing and understanding the crucial nature of not only mud crabs but any other species that may be either in decline or need to be addressed in terms of reforms.

One such reform relates to what is being reported back by recreational fishers. I am looking at changing the quota from 10 to seven. That is a typical example of people informing this government of the need to look at measures to ensure our fisheries sector is sustainable into the future for our children and our grandchildren.

I have been fortunate to have intimate engagement with people who are involved in the industry. We have also looked at measures around spanner crabs to make sure that that species is sustainable into the future and stocks can be replenished in the future. We will always do that.

We introduced tougher penalties for black marketing through the Fisheries Act. At the time I was astounded by the amendments that were put forward by the LNP—that is, giving black marketers a five-day holiday in terms of not being able to access evidence by not seeking a warrant for that period of time. It really begs the question about where the LNP sits in terms of black marketers. Do they support them or do they support their government’s initiative to crackdown on this insidious trade occurring on our waters?

Mr PERRETT: Minister, there appears to be inconsistencies between what you are saying publicly to justify fishery changes and the reality of stock sustainability. Why is the impact of commercial fishing in Queensland being deliberately misrepresented?

Mr MADDEN: Chair—

Mr ANDREW: Mr Chair, I did not hear that question.

Mr MADDEN: You did not want to hear it.

Mr ANDREW: Could the question be asked again?

CHAIR: First of all, member for Ipswich West, did you have a point of order?

Mr MADDEN: Yes, that is an imputation. I would ask my friend to rephrase the question. It breaches standing order 115(b)(iv).

Mr ANDREW: I did not hear the question. What was the question?

CHAIR: Member for Gympie, can you ask your question again and obviously take care to phrase it so that it does not offend standing orders.

Mr PERRETT: There appears to be inconsistencies between what you were saying publicly to justify fishery changes and the reality of stock sustainability. Why is there an inconsistency between what you have said and what is on the department's website?

Mr FURNER: With regard to our fisheries, there is a long history of how we got to where we are now. It is important that I am provided adequate time to go through that history. Going back a few steps, it is important to realise where this all started.

It certainly started back in 2014 with a report, referred to as the MRAG report, in December 2014. This was a report that the previous LNP government sought. They did not table it. It was a Labor government that tabled that report. It provides the nexus in terms of where we are today in relation to implementing measures and having discussions with the fisheries sector about a sustainable fisheries sector. I will refer to a couple of examples in that report that I have certainly heard ventilated not only by the LNP but also by certain parts of the fisheries sector. Recommendation 41 of that report states—

Vessel monitoring systems should be installed on all vessels in offshore quota managed fisheries, commencing initially with the coral reef line fishery (primaries and dorries), spanner crab fishery and offshore shark fishery.

That clearly demonstrates a desire and need to protect this industry by having suitable technology to ensure our commercial fishers are able to detail information about their catches and, many times I have heard from commercial fishers, protect themselves when they are in the Great Barrier Reef.

This is a report that the LNP lacked the intestinal fortitude to table. It took a Labor government to table this report and start the process of protecting our waterways and protecting our sustainable fisheries not only for our commercial fishers and the many jobs that go with that right across the board, right through the supply chain—those commercial fishers who go out on our waters day and night—but also the nearly one million recreational fishers who are now being surveyed—

Mr MICKELBERG: Point of order, Mr Chair, in relation to standing order 118—relevance. The question was with respect to the inconsistencies between what the minister has said and what has been confirmed by the DDG.

CHAIR: I understand what you are getting at, member for Buderim. The question is the same as the last one. From what I have heard, the minister is coming very quickly to the answer. He has been talking about the evolving information that fisheries is getting in, especially regarding the threat of black marketing. Minister, can I ask you to quickly come to the answer.

Mr FURNER: Once again, I thank you for your guidance. The MRAG report, which I will table shortly, demonstrates the inconsistencies between the LNP when in government and their 2017 election commitment. I remember the previous shadow minister for agriculture, Dale Last, went to the election supporting the sustainable fisheries program that the Labor government had in place and no doubt supporting the MRAG report which the LNP lacked the intestinal fortitude to table. I table that report now.

CHAIR: We will have a look at that.

Mr PERRETT: With reference to page 12 of the SDS, what evidence do you have that recreational fishers are impacting mud crab levels? Given that the change is not based on science, will you now abandon new proposed take restrictions?

CHAIR: Minister, you can take any part of that question and answer it however you want.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair. I covered off on a number of those aspects in my previous response to the member. I am pleased today to table a two-year progress report that shows the good progress that has been made in terms of implementing the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. Almost half of those actions—14 out of the 33—have been delivered in the first two years. I will go through those actions so that the member for Gympie understands the importance of a sustainable industry for our fisheries sector.

We have had major achievements in the last 12 months including the rollout of vessel tracking to all crab net and line boats. We have seen amendments to the Fisheries Act 1994 to strengthen compliance powers and increase penalties and to provide for more responsive decision-making. We have seen the significant work that has also been undertaken on proposed reforms to the crab, east coast inshore and trawl fisheries. We have seen the establishment of scientific expert working groups that provide professional detail back to the department of fisheries but also to my office on the need to ensure that we have a sustainable industry.

We have seen today the further 14 recruits come on board that will complement the existing 111 officers who are out there making sure that our waters are sustainable into the future but also cracking down on black market fishing and cracking down on both commercial and recreational fisher men and women who are doing the wrong thing. I am very proud to be the Minister for Fisheries delivering on our sustainable fisheries policy.

I encourage everyone to get on board and realise that this is a resource that affects all Queenslanders. It is not a resource that is directed at any particular sector whatsoever. It covers everyone across the board. It is important that we have a sector that is sustainable into the future, for our children and our grandchildren. I ask the deputy director-general to complement my comments in this area.

CHAIR: We have had a fairly fulsome answer. I ask the deputy director-general to give a brief addition to that, not an extensive one.

Mr Bolton: I can advise that through the latest discussion paper, which closed on 19 July, the proposed recreational mud crab limit change, from 10 to seven, received mixed feedback. Some recreational fishers thought that the change was appropriate while others opposed it. The 30 per cent reduction is generally well supported. In terms of the mud crab changes, we have a specific mud crab fishery working group, which includes representatives from both the recreational and commercial fishing industry to advise on those.

Mr FURNER: Chair, with respect to my previous comments, when I inadvertently commented about Dale Last supporting our sustainable fisheries policy, I meant to say that he supported the MRAG report that the LNP government failed to table when they were in government.

CHAIR: Thank you for that clarification.

Mr MADDEN: I would like to return to the issue of shark control. Minister, with reference to page 12 of the Service Delivery Statements, will you provide an update to the committee on the Shark Control Program following this year's budget?

Mr FURNER: The Queensland government is investing an additional \$17.1 million over four years for its Shark Control Program in the 2019-20 budget to ensure greater swimmer protection and safety at our state's most popular swimming beaches. The funding will continue for the operation and maintenance of the Shark Control Program while investing \$1 million per year in research into new technologies. Part of the extra funding will be spent to support research and trials of new technologies to reduce the risk of shark attacks to swimmers and to roll out specific education and awareness programs. We will continue to support this program, which is well supported by local governments and community organisations.

Queensland's Shark Control Program has been in operation since 1962. There has been only one shark related fatality at one of those beaches in all of that time. I understand that many people have strong views about shark control. We have listened to those views. We have committed \$1 million a year to examine options for technology that may be appropriate for Queensland. However, I will continue to support the Shark Control Program with its combination of shark nets and drum lines. I was fortunate enough to take a four-hour trip out on the water from Southport down the length of the Gold Coast examining the honest and decent hard work that those contractors do, as well as the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers, in checking those nets and drum lines.

Part of the additional funding in this year's budget will allow us to advance research into new swimmer safety technology such as using drones to monitor targeted stretches of coastline, and trials of alternatives will be informed by the scientific working group—an initiative first introduced to the program by our government during the last term. The program includes a great group of internal and external experts in different subjects related to the Shark Control Program.

There is a review of the effectiveness of other technologies currently being undertaken by Cardno, a leading engineering, environment and design consultancy. There will also be continued swimmer education around the dangers posed by sharks. Only our government can be relied upon to support and appropriately fund the Shark Control Program in Queensland.

Ms PUGH: I refer to page 12 of the SDS and the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. The minister is obviously aware of my keen interest in seafood, both from a consumption point of view and from the perspective of a previous restaurant manager. Can the minister please outline the role of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy in driving changes to fisheries management?

Mr FURNER: Since becoming minister I have been clear about my goal as Minister for Fisheries to leave a sustainable legacy for our children and our grandchildren. Chair, I would hope that all members of the committee would agree with this goal and then commit to the actions that will deliver it. This is what Queenslanders have called for. It is what we are delivering.

Certainly I have been encouraged as I have made my way across the great state to numerous locations and met with Queenslanders who want to see our fisheries managed so that they can be prosperous now but also sustainable into the future. Queenslanders want our fish stocks to be healthy, resilient and abundant into the future. That is the case for commercial fishers, who provide seafood to so many local and international markets and who support marketers and downstream businesses. That is the case for the nearly one million people who chose to cast a line or put down a pot last year. They want to know that when they go out on the water there will be a fish or a crab to catch. That is the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and for Queenslanders with an interest in conservation outcomes. This is a worthwhile goal to achieve. The means to do this are articulated in great detail within the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, our 10-year road map to deliver a world-class fisheries management system for Queensland.

When we announced this policy in 2017, our government delivered over \$20 million in new money. This meant 20 new officers for the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, allowing us to reopen the Gladstone base. It meant new money for engagement and new money for scientific and fisheries monitoring. This gives us better detail to help guide our decisions. This new funding meant that we can invest in new technology to support the commercial fishing industry as it transitions towards vessel tracking.

This year's budget builds on the early promise of seed funding to restore and rebuild our fisheries management system in Queensland. We are delivering \$10.8 million in new funding to continue our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and to deliver a sustainable legacy for Queenslanders. We need to look at the LNP's record on this matter because it provides an important reminder of just how far we have come. The LNP cut 28 per cent—28 per cent—of Fisheries staff and in doing so drove our fisheries management back by a generation. They helped undo the good work of public servants, industry members and recreational fishers who made genuine contributions to fisheries management.

Chair, you will understand my reluctance to accept that the LNP has an interest in sustainability and the environmental and economic viability of our fisheries going forward. They buried their own independent expert report into fisheries management, which I have again tabled today. We know that the report recommended significant changes back in 2014 and those are more urgent today. It is disappointing that the LNP has repeatedly reneged on their own election commitment to support the spirit of the MRAG reforms, many of which were articulated in the 2016 green paper on fisheries management. Our 10-year reform strategy is showing significant progress, and I am proud to be part of a government that is making a financial investment in our public service and our fisheries so that we can manage them effectively and sustainably into the future.

CHAIR: Minister, with reference to page 12 of the SDS, can you update the committee on the aquaculture industry in Queensland and its future?

Mr FURNER: This is another very important question with regard to fisheries and aquaculture in Queensland. Twelve months ago I stood on my feet and said that I had a vision for Queensland to be the aquaculture capital of the world. Our state image is green and clean. Aquaculture is the fastest growing food industry globally, so it is important that we do everything we can as a government to tap into that potential. We are supporting Queensland jobs when we eat great tasting Queensland produce, and this project will result in more people eating quality Queensland seafood.

It is not just geography that brings in investment dollars. When I set out my vision for Queensland as an aquaculture capital I also set out to bring private sector investment into our state. It is an Advancing Queensland priority and the priority of local governments which support my vision. I am so proud to say that we are delivering. Our government is helping to scale the industry up. Proponents of aquaculture have repeatedly praised the good work of the Aquaculture Industry Development Network, which is a group within the department that have made it their vision to support the development of this industry. I was proud to launch this group's profile in Townsville earlier this year while viewing aquaculture research at James Cook University.

It is clear to me that Queensland is well placed to make a contribution to the global boom in aquaculture. We are seeing great and well-established companies seeking to move to Queensland. They are not seeking to replicate an existing business in Queensland. They are not just here—

Mr ANDREW: I have a point of order, Mr Chair. There are companies in Queensland. They do not have to move here: they are actually established. I do not know—

CHAIR: I understand what you are saying. You are probably getting close to debating that issue with the minister, so I will ask the minister to continue. I suggest that, if you want to, you can put that in a question and it will come through.

Mr FURNER: They are not just here to carry on existing business as usual—they are here to grow their businesses, to grow hundreds of regional jobs, to be the first movers in a new pillar of our great Queensland regional economies. They are opening new markets and offering new products. They are bringing in new investment. That is what we are seeing in regional centres across Queensland. I want to thank and acknowledge some of the established players in aquaculture for their interest and their investment in regional Queensland. It was great to visit Tassal at their site in Proserpine earlier this year, and I am looking forward to visiting again in the future. It was fantastic to visit the Herbst family at Douglas shire, Far North Queensland, to view the opening of their new venture. I have been heartened by discussions with regional councils, including Rockhampton and the Whitsunday Regional Council, that see the value these industries present. I certainly encourage all members to support this growing industry, the hundreds of jobs it boosts and the exports to local suppliers that come with it.

Mr MADDEN: My question relates to the white spot disease outbreak, Minister, and I refer you to page 17 of the Service Delivery Statements. Will you update the committee on the great work done by you and your department in dealing with the biosecurity response to the white spot disease, including the latest surveillance results?

Mr FURNER: This is another example of the good work that Biosecurity Queensland is doing to protect our valuable produce and resources within this state. White spot disease is a highly contagious viral infection that affects crustaceans, prawns and crabs, but it is not harmful to human health and this seafood is safe to eat. The latest round of surveillance tests conducted by Biosecurity Queensland showed no signs of white spot disease in South-East Queensland waters, more than two and a half years after the virus devastated some seven of the big prawn farms operating on the Logan River. It is a big relief for the prawn farmers whose stocks were destroyed after white spot disease was first discovered two and a half years ago. They have restocked their production ponds again. Prawn and marine worm samples were taken from a number of locations within Moreton Bay and the Logan and Brisbane rivers: all returned negative results.

This is good news for the industry and its employment prospects. This is the second consecutive surveillance round conducted by my department which has returned negative results for the virus that causes white spot disease. We are looking towards ‘proof of freedom’ status. If another round of tests next year is negative Queensland and Australia will be declared free of white spot disease, but this means that everyone must continue to remain vigilant to ensure the disease is contained and does not spread. I thank the industry for its resilience and patience during this hard time and the general community, especially the recreational fishers, for heeding our messages and helping to stop the spread of this disease.

I want to acknowledge the leadership shown by operators and industry over this trying period, including the Australian Prawn Farmers Association. I have been impressed by farmers as well such as Matt West and their strategies to retain and grow their businesses. Affected businesses have gone through a lot of financial and mental stress, with Logan farms having to shut down for lengthy periods for the sole purpose of eradicating the disease. As Mr West raised with me, we need to be vigilant not just for white spot but other diseases coming into our country. It is impressive that we boost exotic disease testing regimes at our borders to prevent many other outbreaks, and the end of the white spot disease outbreak would be a very good result not only for Logan farmers but also Queensland’s prawn farming industry, which is currently enjoying a considerable statewide expansionary phase. Established aquaculture companies and major new entrants are spending millions and millions of dollars to expand their farms or construct new or very large-scale operations. This is part of my vision for aquaculture: to expand production in Queensland, drive private sector investment and generate new jobs in our regions.

CHAIR: Just one brief question and a brief answer. The member for—

Mr ANDREW: Thank you. Minister—

CHAIR: No, the member for Ipswich West.

Mr ANDREW: My apologies. I would love to jump in.

CHAIR: Your chance will come.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, again I refer you to page 17 of the Service Delivery Statements. Will you update the committee on the measures in place to tackle white spot disease and the situation for our prawn farmers, both inside and outside the containment areas?

Mr FURNER: Thank you for your ongoing interest with respect to aquaculture and fisheries. I have visited some of those sites in Logan and North Queensland. I was joined by the member for Coomera and the member for Macalister during one of those visits in and around Logan. Additionally,

biosecurity measures are in place on the Logan prawn farms where white spot disease was first detected in order to protect farms from disease incursions. Line fishing is still not permitted around the prawn farm inlets and outlet channels. This measure will remain in force at this time, as will movement restrictions on raw prawns, yabbies and marine worms in South-East Queensland.

Three of the seven Logan prawn farms restocked their ponds last summer. The biggest operator harvests around 421 tonnes of their much sought after prawns. Although this is well down on what it was prior to the disease outbreak, production is set to double again later this year. The battling Logan prawn farms got another much needed boost after the owners of Gold Coast Marine Aquaculture won the prestigious champion prawn and the champion aquaculture product trophy at the Sydney royal show, which sets the quality benchmark for all Australian seafood. Noel Herbst pioneered prawn farming in Queensland. He established his family run business in Logan in 1986.

It is so pleasing to see Queensland run businesses competing with the world. The global aquaculture industry is valued at hundreds of billions of dollars, and Queensland is well placed to take advantage of the opportunities on offer. Overseas aquaculture is rapidly overtaking the wild catch fishery in value. We recognise that this is a great scope for the wild caught and aquaculture sectors in Queensland. In Queensland, the industry is valued at \$120 million and is rising fast, with the production of prawns making up the lion's share of this figure.

To boost the sector further, the government has identified six aquaculture development areas in the Townsville, Whitsunday, Mackay, Rockhampton and Gladstone regions. Identifying areas suitable for aquaculture development is an important initiative to grow the industry and will bring more jobs to a stronger regional Queensland economy. My department reports that there have already been a number of inquiries from prospective entrants as well.

We are also working to support Queensland seafood build its market share. Nothing beats Queensland's fresh, tasty and delicious seafood. That is a key message of our Ask for Queensland Seafood campaign. The Ask for Queensland Seafood campaign featured footy legend Sam Thaiday, who has again stepped up to bolster confidence and appreciation for seafood lovers to buy Queensland seafood. It complements our #eatqld campaign. Buying local produce benefits local businesses. It creates more jobs. Commercial fishers continue to support their families and Queenslanders can enjoy fresh seafood.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of groups like the Queensland Seafood Marketers Association and members of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association for supporting these initiatives. In particular, I thank Marshall Betzel and Neil from the Queensland Seafood Marketers Association for helping diversify the #eatqld campaign in relation to the delicious Queensland seafood in Cairns. The product can itself be together and we can help others to #eatqld also.

CHAIR: We will go to the opposition. Member for Gympie, do you have a question?

Mr PERRETT: I do. Minister, I refer to page 8 of the SDS relating to Biosecurity Queensland's service area objectives and in particular its role to work closely with industry bodies and producers. I refer to the answer provided to question on notice No. 504 which referred to your role in facilitating the Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee, which last met in January 2018. Given that the advisory committee has met only once since the last state election and only once since you became minister, do you think the industry not having a formal say on something as important as biosecurity for 19 months is acceptable?

CHAIR: I am going to let that one through. It is asking for an opinion but the minister might want to provide an answer as he sees fit.

Mr FURNER: As I understand it, the question related to biosecurity in general over a number of years. As it relates to biosecurity, I am happy to provide a general response, if that is suitable. The Biosecurity Queensland Ministerial Advisory Committee has been a key stakeholder advisory group within Biosecurity Queensland for a number of years. BQMAC has provided a forum where representatives of key stakeholder groups could provide independent, informed and strategic advice on biosecurity matters to the minister. BQMAC has also facilitated a genuine partnership with biosecurity leaders throughout Queensland who are able to influence strategic biosecurity agendas into the future.

The release of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy 2018-2023 now requires BQMAC to take on more active leadership roles in leading the development, implementation and independent monitoring of the strategy. The terms of reference of this important stakeholder group have recently been changed to reflect this new function. Its role is to provide strategic oversight of Queensland's priorities within the

national biosecurity system, advise of key biosecurity issues and trends, and support consultation and disseminate information to stakeholders. It also plays a role in the critical monitoring of Biosecurity Queensland's service delivery against the themes of the Queensland Biosecurity Strategy.

An expression-of-interest process has recently closed in order to fill the renewed BQMAC. A refresh of the membership also provides an opportunity to ensure that the new composition of the group meets gender equity targets for Queensland government boards, as membership of the previous BQMAC was predominantly male. Nominees for BQMAC have been sought from peak biosecurity organisations and stakeholder groups and have contributed to the development of the biosecurity strategy.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, the first recommendation from the last meeting of the committee in January 2018 highlighted the need, as mentioned by the minister, for gender equity on the committee. Has the committee not met because of the inability to find suitable representation? Why did recruitment of new members for the committee commence only in May, more than 16 months after the last meeting?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. Based on that further questioning regarding the operation and composition of the committee, I seek to have the deputy director-general and Chief Biosecurity Officer, Malcolm Letts, respond to that particular question.

Mr Letts: As the minister has indicated, the reason for the changes in BQMAC was predominantly around the changes in the legislation which came into effect in 2016 from the 2014 act and the strategy, which actually is very much a strategy about partnership with industry. BQMAC, as it had existed previously, was very much in relation to advising a minister. This organisation will be very much more about how we work together with industry to deliver biosecurity outcomes for Queensland. The timing in relation to the delay in putting the BQMAC into place was in part delivered because of the timing of the discussions we were having around the strategy, the launch of the strategy and the other work that was happening within Biosecurity Queensland at the time, associated with what role BQMAC would take on and the discussions we were having with industry around that role.

Mr FURNER: Chair, can I provide some information to the committee?

CHAIR: Just briefly.

Mr FURNER: I understand that we have some answers to the questions taken on notice through the director-general.

CHAIR: Thanks, Minister. We will come to that at the end of the session, just before quarter past seven.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to page 12 of the SDS relating to the responsibility of managing and reforming Queensland's fishery sector. Can you advise the committee when you became aware of the issue the industry was experiencing with the departmental certified vessel monitoring systems, or VMS, supplier Option Audio? How many complaints have been lodged about the quality of service and products this group offered?

Dr Woods: I thank the member for the question. We have certainly been aware of a small number of faults from the early days of the uptake of vessel tracking units. Fisheries Queensland has been communicating with providers to rectify those issues as quickly as possible. As with any large-scale rollout of modern technologies like vessel tracking, a small fault rate is expected. The faulty units reported to date represent less than five per cent of the units currently in operation.

Industry initially raised concerns that vessel tracking units did not comply with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority National Standard for Commercial Vessel requirements. Fisheries Queensland sought advice from AMSA on this matter. AMSA advised that they do not approve or certify equipment such as vessel tracking units, nor are they required to. AMSA additionally advised that the vessel tracking units' cabling, terminals and all fuses are the installers' responsibility, similar to when fishers are installing equipment such as sounders or chartplotters.

Owners and operators must continue to ensure all electrical equipment installed on their commercial vessel satisfies the relevant Australian Standard 3004 and the NSCV C5B requirements. Those of course are workplace health and safety requirements.

Fisheries Queensland has been advised by one unit provider that incorrect cabling was provided with a small number of YB3i units that had been dispatched. The unit provider has replaced all incorrect cabling previously sent. Fisheries Queensland is aware that there have been a number of issues surrounding the service delivery provided by the YB3i unit provider Option Audio during the

implementation phase. Once made aware of these issues, Fisheries Queensland took steps to rectify them. These included case managing all complaints raised and liaising directly with Option Audio on a daily basis to find resolutions.

Fisheries Queensland also took steps and spoke to the manufacturer of the YB3i unit, Rock Seven, to approve an alternate provider of the YB3i unit in Australia. Option Audio has now been removed from the list of approved providers and all existing Option Audio contracts have been transitioned to a new provider, Pivotel. Fisheries Queensland has worked closely with Option Audio, Pivotel and Rock Seven to minimise the impacts on commercial fishers as a result of the transition of contracts.

Fisheries Queensland also became aware of SPOT Trace units and cables overheating. A small number of units and cables have been returned to the provider, Pivotel, and replacements supplied. While the number of cable faults for SPOT Trace units is low, all cables are now being tested prior to shipment and the manufacturer is also testing all cables held in stock. Since the overheating incidents and the communication that occurred, another two overheating issues have been identified. Cables were returned to Pivotel and forwarded to the manufacturer for diagnosis. It has been found that water entry caused these cables to overheat.

Fisheries Queensland has allowed commercial fishers to use the internal batteries instead of being connected to an external power source if they have concerns about their cables. Pivotel continues to engage with Globalstar to find a solution for a fit-for-purpose cable. To accommodate the fact that these difficulties were occurring in the small number—less than five per cent as I indicated—of vessels, our compliance approach initially focused on education and awareness. This has been followed over time with formal warnings and then fines for noncompliance. Since the new offence and the heavier penalty for vessel monitoring offences began in May 2019, eight cautions have been issued.

QBFP are continuing to work with fishers to educate and enforce the requirement for vessel tracking and we continue to play a role in assisting any fishers who have difficulties with the commercial providers of these products.

Mr PERRETT: Minister, the department advises that more than 900 VMS units and 50 back orders at a cost of \$206.50 per unit were meant to be installed. This equates to just under \$200,000 of commercial fishers' money that has been sunk into Option Audio as the only certified supplier of the YB3i VMS unit and does not include the additional ongoing polling plan costs, which can go for three years. Why has the government allowed Option Audio to profit from a government endorsed monopoly at the financial and emotional expense of hardworking commercial fishers?

Ms PUGH: Point of order. Obviously, in addition to the clear imputations in the question around the emotions of the fisherpeople, I feel like the director-general just answered that question.

Mr ANDREW: Through the chair—

CHAIR: Hang on. I have to deal with this point of order first. I will ask the member to quickly rephrase that question. First of all, there is a point of order from the member for Mirani.

Mr ANDREW: I have actually been a professional fisherman for a long time.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, it is about the question itself, instead of debating the issue. Do you have a point of order about the question?

Mr ANDREW: Let him sort it.

CHAIR: Okay. We will come back to you. Member for Gympie?

Mr PERRETT: I am cognisant of the time and we are getting close, so I will move to the next follow-up question to the minister. Following a formal complaint to the Queensland Ombudsman by commercial fishers, who had concerns about the rollout of the vessel monitoring system, it appears the department has commenced managing out Option Audio as a certified VMS supplier as they no longer feature on the department's website as a supplier and an email was sent to the commercial fishers giving them the option to transfer from Option Audio. Minister, was it a mistake that no tendering or procurement processes were undertaken before forcing commercial fishers to deal with this government endorsed, certified VMS supplier, and why did it take so long to act?

CHAIR: I believe that one has been answered. I am going to allow this one through, but I point out that you have an argument and an opinion in there as well as a very long preamble. We have dealt with this previously; there is some repetition. Was the question to the minister?

Mr PERRETT: Yes.

CHAIR: I will allow the minister to answer that one.

Mr FURNER: Thank you, Chair. I agree with your summary of the answers provided by the director-general previously. I want to add some additional material around this subject. Following on from the tabling of the MRAG report, which I have done recently, this demonstrates the acceptance of both the LNP and the Labor government of the need for a VMS as a suitable tool to ensure our waters are sustainable. You would accept the fact that Queenslanders expect that we will use the best available information and technology to manage our fisheries just like any other natural resource.

For fisheries, it is important that regulators are able to gather accurate and consistent data about how fishers are interacting with the environment in terms of fish stocks et cetera. This is an important reason why vessel tracking is a critical element of modern fisheries management. Vessel tracking and the data it provides help us to demonstrate that Queensland has a sustainable fishing industry. It is also critical to our social licence for fishers operating in and around some of the natural wonders of the world like the Great Barrier Reef. That is not a new concept. Vessel tracking has been in place in Queensland in the trawler industry—and I am certain the member for Mirani would be mindful of that—over the last two decades. It has been part of several other Queensland fisheries for many years. I will revert to my director-general to add some additional specifics to that further question from the member for Gympie.

CHAIR: Just briefly.

Dr Woods: In relation to the question that was answered, there was a full procurement process and there was a selection process with a trial of units. Option Audio demonstrated that they were a reputable service provider of vessel tracking devices with more than 10 years experience. They were able to provide a testimonial from a customer praising their excellent service and quality of tracking devices.

The actual tracking device, the YB3i unit, has performed well and sent data effectively throughout. It meets the department's requirements as it is waterproof, operates on a satellite network and has the benefit of being able to be powered by internal and external power. There were no concerns about the unit itself and few complaints from fishers about the unit. At the time of approval, Option Audio was the only supplier of the YB3i unit in Australia. Once we were made aware of the issues that industry was experiencing with Option Audio—

Mr ANDREW: Point of order, Mr Chair. There were complaints from the fishers. There were complaints. That was not polling back.

CHAIR: Your point of order needs to be about the question. You want to debate the issue. Once again, you will have to wait for that.

Dr Woods: In terms of the specifics of the process, once we were made aware of the service issues that industry was experiencing with Option Audio, we took steps to rectify the matters I have already described through assisting to case manage all complaints. We also worked with Rock Seven to approve an alternative additional provider of the YB3i unit in Australia, Pole Star. As a result of that process, Option Audio took a commercial decision to focus on its other business areas and to exit the vessel tracking market. As a result of this, Option Audio is no longer an approved provider.

The manufacturer of the YB3i unit, Rock Seven, now has a contract with Pivotal to manage the existing contracts previously held by Option Audio, and that transition process has already been described. It is not the case that the department forced or brought about this change; it was a commercial decision by Option Audio to move out of the business. The question also asked about a procurement process, which was undertaken.

Mr PERRETT: Director-General, I refer to page 8 of the SDS relating to Biosecurity Queensland's service area objectives relating to the department's role in upholding animal welfare and agricultural chemical use. Since the latest biosecurity legislation and subsequent regulation came into place, can you please outline yearly, from 2015 to the present, the number of fines and total revenue collected by the department as a result of breaches?

CHAIR: That question is somewhat excessive and onerous. I will give the director-general some latitude in answering that. You have asked about fines, but the director-general can cover that as she wishes and in a brief manner.

Dr Woods: I certainly have the information to hand about the infringements that were issued in the last financial year. In 2018-19, three infringements were issued by Biosecurity Queensland for offences under the Biosecurity Act 2014. Of these three infringements, two were issued for offences relating to untagged cattle and one infringement was issued for incomplete movement records. Of course, there are a range of other warnings, advisory measures et cetera that compliance officers within the department utilise in addition to moving to infringements.

Ms PUGH: With reference to page 12 of the SDS, will the minister update the committee on trends in recreational fishing in Queensland?

Mr FURNER: I know that the member and most members of the committee love throwing a line in the water and fishing when the opportunity arises. They are not alone on this. Nearly one million Queenslanders went fishing last year. We know that recreational fishing is a time-honoured pastime in Queensland. Certainly, Queenslanders' love of fishing reflects a broader consumer trend towards outdoor lifestyles, making the most of our state's natural beauty. It is a trend that our government has recognised and supported from the start through the implementation of net-free zones and the promotion of recreational fishing tourism in Rockhampton, Cairns and Mackay.

Last weekend I was in Cairns catching up with my family. A local councillor spoke positively about the Palaszczuk government's investment in the net-free zones in Trinity Inlet and about seeing the return of a number of species. I thank local councils for their strong support of this election commitment and for their efforts to promote local tourism. It is no surprise that more Queenslanders than ever are taking the chance to get out and catch a feed.

I am pleased to advise the committee that the figures from our most recent recreational fishing survey are now available. This year's survey results, revealed in last week's *Sunday Mail*, show that 943,000 people are now classified as recreational fishers in Queensland. The survey estimates that these 943,000 Queenslanders, aged eight years and older, went fishing at least once in the last 12 months. This is a significant lift from the last survey conducted in 2013, which showed that 642,000 people in Queensland were classified as recreational fishers.

This year's survey was a significant undertaking. The survey commenced in February 2019 is the eighth and largest one of its kind. The figures arrived at are part of an extensive process involving boat ramp surveys, telephone surveys, catch records and a longitudinal research program. The data estimates have also been revised by a party external to Fisheries Queensland.

This data is important because it supports the scientific and evidence base that underpins our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. We want to ensure that we have the best information for Queenslanders to support sustainable decision-making. We have to make it a priority in our budget. That is why this year the Palaszczuk government allocated another \$10.6 million in new funding to support the rollout of our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. Part of this money goes towards keeping monitoring programs going. It also keeps our programs at the cutting edge. That is a strong, sustainable legacy to leave for our children and grandchildren—good data, good decision-making and good stocks for a day out casting a line. In fact, it is more likely now than ever that our grandchildren are members of Queensland's growing recreational fishing community. It is a community that our government is supporting and will continue to support.

Mr MADDEN: Minister, I refer to page 12 of the Service Delivery Statements and to the question on notice. Will you update the committee on the role and staffing of our very dedicated Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol?

Mr FURNER: It has been a privilege to spend time with the men and women of our Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol, be it on the water or off the water, across our state. Over the last year and more, I have been fortunate to join officers at the Gold Coast, Redlands, Pinkenba, Hervey Bay, Yeppoon, Gladstone, Mackay, Cairns, Weipa and many other locations. It has been a pleasure to be invited to milestones for the patrol, such as welcoming a majority of 20 new officers funded by our government at a graduation ceremony, or reopening the Gladstone Boating and Fisheries Patrol base.

Today I was especially delighted to welcome at Parliament House 17 new officers starting this week and next, at the very start of their careers. These officers are about to start work in Weipa, Hervey Bay, Redlands, Townsville, Kingaroy, Mackay, Bundaberg, Ingham, Gladstone, Port Douglas, Cairns, Airlie Beach and just up the river at Pinkenba. Officers come from a variety of backgrounds and even multiple generations. I was also pleased to acknowledge a number of long-serving staff—one individual with an incredible 37 years of service, in an era when people tend to be highly mobile in moving between different jobs and career paths. It is gratifying to see members of the Public Service who are so passionate about their work that they make it a lifelong pursuit. I thank them for their service.

The Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol enforces fisheries and boating safety laws through surveillance and inspection and undertakes related education with industry and community groups. These dedicated officers patrol the thousands of kilometres of coastline, rivers, lakes, weirs and inland waterways across our state. They perform an important educational role. They explain the fishing rules and regulations to recreational fishers, commercial fishers and the general community and keep vessel operators informed about small craft safety. They give talks to community groups and take part in community events. They check that fish are sold through legal markets and that fish markets do not sell

undersize fish. They investigate cases of alleged infringement, issue cautions or infringement notices and, when necessary, prosecute matters in the Magistrates Court. Only our government will back the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol with the resources and power it needs to take on black marketers and wrongdoers. We have delivered new powers, new officers, new offences and new technology and equipment to help them meet their goals.

As I said earlier, last year I was astounded, to see the LNP work to compromise the effectiveness of our Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers. It was a shameful attempt to stop our public servants upholding good provisions by proposing an amendment to give black marketers a five-day head start. Thankfully, common sense and a majority government prevailed. With over 245,000 recreational and 13,000 commercial vessels in use, compliance with laws is necessary to ensure both the safety of our waterways and the sustainability of our fisheries resources. This is not an insignificant beat to patrol. Again, I wish our new officers all the very best in their career and thank them for choosing to serve Queensland.

Mr KATTER: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 10 and the new VMS requirements that were introduced on 1 January. What explanation does the minister have for Queensland fishermen now six months into the VMS regime where fishermen and the Productivity Commissioner were told that the required units would cost \$30 to \$40 per month but in reality the actual price is now \$40 to \$60 per month?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question and from the start the commitment was put forward with \$3 million to assist industry with implementing vessel tracking. Those rebates were available to help the industry with the initial purchase and also the installation costs of vessel tracking units. The rebate scheme has been designed so that the majority of fishers should not be out of pocket by the installation and the cost of the purchase of those units. Fisheries Queensland respects the privacy of commercial fishers' data and treats this information with confidentiality. Individual information collected is used by internal fishers for management purposes and is shared only with compliance partners under strict conditions. Furthermore, to give confidence to that data and its protection, Fisheries Queensland engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to audit the safeguards that are in place and recommend any necessary improvements. Furthermore, I will refer to the Deputy Director-General of Fisheries and Forestry, Graeme Bolton, to elaborate further on your question.

Mr Bolton: I thank the member for the question. Through the rollout and implementation of the vessel monitoring system, there was, as the minister mentioned, \$3 million made available for rebates through the QRIDA program. That covered both the purchase of the unit and installation. The ongoing costs of the unit, as per any other data like phones, is the sole responsibility of the operator. In time we will have a number of providers that will provide this service and the expectation is that competition will drive that down, but that is a matter for the fisher to take up with the various providers.

Mr KATTER: As a quick supplementary, there were metrics applied obviously with that \$3 million in that that would be the cost. Was there an acknowledgement that the quantum of costs would be different? You reimbursed them with \$3 million for instalment and to quantify what the ongoing costs would be. I acknowledge that you just said that the cost was their responsibility, but I imagine some estimates were made initially to say, 'This is the sum we'll apply based on the \$30 or \$40.' Was there an acknowledgement that those prices were higher than initially planned?

Mr Bolton: Thank you for the clarification. Part of the estimation when we started the rollout looked at a range, so we were never specific about what that price would be. They are very much a private arrangement between the provider and the purchaser and something that the department cannot control.

Mr KATTER: That did not relate to the \$3 million?

Mr Bolton: No. The \$3 million that was made available was for a rebate against the purchase and installation of the unit.

Mr ANDREW: I am probably one of the only master fishermen in this room—correct me if I am wrong—and I have probably caught more Spanish mackerel than the number of people sitting here in four hours on my own, but I will say this: I am very concerned about how we are going forward.

CHAIR: Can we get to the question please?

Mr ANDREW: Yes. At the moment, looking at your figures, Mr Furner, there are 950,000 recreational fishers. If 0.25 per cent or 2,375 of those people were to catch in a 50-foot dragnet, there would be 47,500 juvenile fish caught in that net. What are you doing going forward to restrict the death of juvenile fish through recreational fishing? We are now looking at both sides of the story and we need to know how we are going to stop that, and that is in a net-free zone.

CHAIR: We have the question. Do not worry about the hypothetical and the long preamble. The question was about—

Mr ANDREW: I say that as a master fisherman.

CHAIR: Yes, okay. Your question is therefore about catching juvenile fish by recreational fishermen.

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for Mirani for his question, and it is an important question and certainly a matter that is addressed in the discussion paper that concluded last Friday looking at measures of nets not only in terms of the fishing part that you have just described but also with respect to ghost netting. There is a whole range of measures with respect to the elimination or the decrease of juvenile species in our waterways which your question alluded to. That is a matter that has been well received through the feedback through many of the over 900 submissions from both commercial and recreational fishers, but to complement that I might refer to the Deputy Director-General of Fisheries and Forestry, Graeme Bolton, to specifically target your question with respect to bycatch with regard to the nettings you were referring to.

Mr Bolton: With regard to the concerns raised, the proposals underneath the current discussion paper, which closed last Friday on 19 July, is to introduce a new general possession limit of 20 for fish where there is no species possession limit, and that does exclude bait. There are other ranges of reform proposed including introducing an imposition limit of 50 for certain bait species as well as a range of others for the other recreational type fish and mud crab.

Mr ANDREW: Does that address bycatch when you drag that 50-foot net?

CHAIR: He is getting to the answer.

Mr Bolton: That is pretty much it.

CHAIR: That is it. Did you have a further follow-up question?

Mr ANDREW: Those fish will be thrown on the sand and die, especially if there is a running out tide. There is no way that those people are going to look at reconstituting those fish and throwing them back in the sea. They pick up their own fish and leave the rest to die and drag again. I am a person who has done this, not just because I have done it; I have lived with it all my life.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, I ask you to come to your question.

Mr ANDREW: I am concerned, given the reasoning of what we are doing, whether it is sustainable within the state government.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, you have almost repeated the question. Your question is coming down to how is this sustainable; is that correct?

Mr ANDREW: That is correct.

Mr FURNER: Chair, I am wondering whether I would be at liberty to ask the member for Mirani for a briefing specifically on this matter given the time constraints for the closure of this estimates hearing. I would be willing to facilitate for that to happen.

Mr ANDREW: Minister, there is other stuff as well such as the way we are looking at delivering the new legislation. Even the jewfish legislation does not really reflect what can be taken by the 950,000 recreational fishermen, even if they took one fish per year at a quarter of a per cent at 10 kilos. I am very worried about how we are delivering sustainability in terms of the government looking after our resources and our biomass.

CHAIR: Member for Mirani, once again it is a question about sustainability which is repeating the last one. Minister, do you have anything brief to add on the issue of sustainability? Obviously the offer for a briefing is there and I recommend the member for Mirani take up that offer.

Mr ANDREW: I just want to put it on the public record because I do not see how—

CHAIR: I think you have.

Mr ANDREW:—we can say one thing but then see the actual figures and do another.

CHAIR: I think you have put it on the public record here.

Mr ANDREW: Thank you, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: I urge you once again to take up the minister's offer.

Ms BOLTON: I am going to be very quick and it will have to be a very quick answer, Minister. I refer to page 12 of the SDS regarding the continuation of the Shark Control Program, which has been very popular tonight. In response to questions from the member for Gympie and others, you outlined

that \$1 million has been set aside for research and trials in new technologies. When and where is it expected that these trials will commence given that smart drum lines and other technologies are already being used nationally and internationally in place of mesh nets and lethal drum lines?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for her question. That is correct. In relation to that investment that you alluded to in your question with respect to new technologies, the examination of those has already commenced. I will throw to the deputy director-general of fisheries, Graeme Bolton, to elaborate on where and how.

Mr Bolton: I thank the member for the question. We have started looking at the alternative trials. The Shark Control Program expert panel met a little while ago. We have commissioned Cardno, a leading environmental expert, to consider a number of recommendations. They will look at what has already been used around the world, both the electronic buoys and other digital monitoring activity. They will make a number of recommendations to the expert panel and the panel will then make some recommendations to the minister about where to go with the trials.

Ms BOLTON: I will go back to my question. When and where? What is the time frame here?

Mr Bolton: We are expecting the report from Cardno probably within the next month or so.

Mr BERKMAN: With Queensland shark nets having entangled at least three whales in the last few weeks alone, why is it that the Queensland government does not remove them from the waters during the migration period, as is standard practice in New South Wales?

Mr FURNER: I thank the member for his question. I think I covered off earlier our government's commitment to the Shark Control Program. That is a program that has been in existence since 1962. It has proven its value in protecting human life.

I take on board your question with respect to whales, which is certainly an important aspect of tourism up and down the coast of Queensland. In fact, at the recruitment engagement here on the green this morning I was talking to an officer from Southport. They have information of whales coming up the coast that have been entangled in apparatus in New South Wales waters and are being monitored as they enter Queensland waters. I think that was the case most recently with respect to, I believe, a humpback whale off the coast of Queensland—somewhere around Stradbroke island.

I refer back to the comments I made earlier about my opportunity to go out on the water with the men and women of the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol and the contractors who are engaged in the Shark Control Program. I saw firsthand no whales, because it was before whale season, but some marine life that was captured in some of the nets were released live. I understand that there are occasions when whales are entangled in some of our equipment. That is based on the knowledge and the information that I received this morning. There were whales coming up from New South Wales that had been entangled in some of the equipment that is used off the coast of New South Wales, or possibly it might have been from private users of that type of equipment. I will defer to the director-general to complement my response to your question.

Dr Woods: We certainly have a commitment, as part of the examination of alternative control measures, to consider the possibility of replacing some nets with drum lines. However, it is important to note that we have four marine animal rescue teams stationed up and down the coast. Of the 54 whales that have been entangled—and I may not be quite correct here, but I believe this is since 2006—52 out of the 54 have been released alive. In saying that, it is important to bear in mind the context, which is that the current estimate is roughly 35,000 whales migrating up the coast. It is a very small proportion that is entangled, and the vast majority of those are released without damage.

Ms BOLTON: Do we have time for one more question?

CHAIR: Are you seeking a clarification?

Ms BOLTON: A clarification. Will that report be made available to the public and to us?

Mr Bolton: I would like to take that on notice, but at this point in time, depending on when we receive it—we have not considered that, but I would expect that we would make that publicly available and available through the website.

Ms BOLTON: Wonderful. Thank you.

CHAIR: The time has just about expired. We have a couple of issues that we need to get information on. I will leave that to the director-general.

Dr Woods: I have answers to a couple of questions that we took on notice. In terms of the question about why the Shark Control Program Scientific Working Group has not met since 2018 and why the minutes are not online, the working group did meet in November 2018 and those minutes are

online. It met again on 14 June 2019. Those minutes have been finalised and they will go online once they have been approved by the working group. The working group routinely meets twice a year, but it has agreed to meet more regularly—three to four times a year—given the recent concerns around shark attacks and shark control approaches. The next date has not been set, but it is expected to happen in September. Obviously, ideally we would be wanting the working group to be considering the Cardno report, to which the deputy director-general just referred.

The second question we took on notice was in relation to the question of the 2018-19 shark catch in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. There were: tiger sharks, 86 caught of which 64 were greater than two metres in length; bull sharks, 90 caught of which nine were greater than two metres in length; and white sharks, none caught. There were many sharks that were just under two metres in length and none of those sharks were released alive, as all target species are euthanased.

There are a couple of other small corrections that I need to make. I am advised that I may have said or used the term 'infection' of fire ants when it should have been 'infestation'. The minister in his answer on the RED Grants referred to 'PB Holdings'. In fact, it is P Brodie Holdings, which trades as PB Agrifood. Just for clarification, we will get that one right.

In relation to the question about farm business debt mediation, the minister said that seven were farmer initiated. We think that should have been eight. The minister said that 31 mediators were accredited, but I am advised that the current number is 39.

I need to advise that the minister advised that the Special Disaster Assistance Recovery Grants would close on 9 August. That has just been extended and that will now be Friday, 29 November to accommodate the fact that some repair businesses are not available.

In relation to the strawberry tampering incident, the minister said that he believed it was around 100 growers. We understand that it was closer to 60. In relation to the question on white spot disease—another round of white spot disease surveillance—that will, in fact, be two sampling events, because it is seasonal, so one in March-April 2020 and one in August-September 2020.

In relation to the question on biosecurity infringements back to 2015 where I advised that I had only this year's data, in fact this is the first year that infringement notices have been issued. It is only this year's data.

In relation to the statewide recreational fishing survey, the survey estimates that 943,000 Queenslanders aged five years or older went fishing in Queensland at least once in the last 12 months, which was up from 642,000. I think the minister may have said 'aged eight and above' but it was actually aged five or above. I misspoke in relation to the Option Audio vessel management tracking devices. I think I used the term 'procurement process'. Because this is a commercial relationship between the fisher and the supplier of the device, what the department undertook was a selection process. I think that is all of the corrections.

CHAIR: That is pretty extensive. Thank you. Minister, before we close, did you want to make a comment?

Mr FURNER: I have some very quick closing comments. Firstly, can I check with the committee that there are no outstanding questions on notice?

CHAIR: I believe that is everything.

Mr FURNER: In conclusion, I thank you, Chair, and all the other members of the committee, in particular the member for Gympie, for those questions. I am immensely proud of the people in my department who work so tirelessly and diligently in supporting agriculture, fisheries and forestry in this state. I constantly get feedback from a lot of stakeholders and men and women on the land about the excellent work they do. In that respect, I am very proud.

It definitely is a competitive world, with increasing advancements in technology, climate change, drought, rapidly evolving markets and complex trade arrangements between some of our biggest trading partners. On that note I would like to inform the committee that I am proud that Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr Susumu Hamamura, will be visiting from Japan on 26 and 27 July and will accompany myself and other staff to the electorate of Burdekin. It follows on from the trade delegation I took to Japan last year and is another example of the interest in our growing Queensland produce. I think any producer in Queensland would be very proud of the produce they provide.

In closing I would like to thank my director-general, Beth Woods, my deputy directors-general, Bernadette Ditchfield and Sinead McCarthy, chief biosecurity officer Malcolm Letts, chief financial officer Mike Richards, estimates team leaders Georgina Wilkinson and Kym Coyne and all their teams

for their efforts in preparing these estimates and throughout the last year. I would also like to thank my staff and reiterate my belief that agriculture, fisheries and forestry are too important to be bogged down in politics. I reaffirm my standing offer to anyone, whether it be from the opposition or crossbenches, for a briefing on this fantastic portfolio that I represent.

CHAIR: Thank you for that and thank you for your attendance, as well as that of the departmental officers. Thank you to the members of the committee and other members of parliament who have been with us today. Thank you especially to Hansard and our secretariat. You have all done a great job. I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 7.21 pm.