



2022-2023 Budget Estimates

Report No. 22, 57th Parliament
Health and Environment Committee
August 2022

Health and Environment Committee

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Acknowledgements

The committee thanks the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, Leader of the House and Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, and Hon Meaghan Scanlon MP, Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, for their assistance in the committee's examination of the budget estimates. The committee also acknowledges the assistance provided by departmental officers during the estimates process.

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Abbreviations

committee	Health and Environment Committee
DES	Department of Environment and Science
HHS	Hospital and Health Service
OHO	Office of the Health Ombudsman
QAS	Queensland Ambulance Service
QIMR Berghofer	The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research, known as QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute
QMHC	Queensland Mental Health Commission
SDS	Service Delivery Statements

Chair's foreword

This report presents a summary of the committee's examination of the budget estimates for the 2022-23 financial year.

Consideration of the budget estimates allows for the public examination of the responsible Ministers and the chief executive officers of agencies within the committee's portfolio areas. This was undertaken through the questions on notice and public hearing process.

The committee has recommended that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the committee's areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

On behalf of the committee, I thank the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, and departmental officers for their co-operation in providing information to the committee throughout this process.

I thank the members of the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution to the estimates process, and other members whose participation in the hearing provided additional scrutiny of the estimates.



Aaron Harper MP

Chair

1 Introduction

1.1 Role of the committee

The Health and Environment Committee (committee) is a portfolio committee of the Legislative Assembly which commenced on 26 November 2020 under the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* and the Standing Rules and Orders of the Legislative Assembly.¹

The committee's areas of responsibility are:

- Health and Ambulance Services
- Environment, Great Barrier Reef, Science and Youth Affairs.

Section 93(1) of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001* provides that a portfolio committee is responsible for examining each Bill and item of subordinate legislation in its portfolio areas to consider:

- the policy to be given effect by the legislation
- the application of fundamental legislative principles
- matters arising under the *Human Rights Act 2019*
- for subordinate legislation – its lawfulness.

The committee also has oversight functions in relation to the Health Ombudsman and the health service complaints management system.

1.2 Inquiry process

On 24 June 2022, the Appropriation Bill 2022 (Bill) and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility were referred to the committee for investigation and report.²

On 29 July 2022, the committee conducted a public hearing and took evidence about the proposed expenditure from the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, and other witnesses. A copy of the transcript of the committee's hearing is available on the committee's webpage.³

1.3 Aim of this report

This report summarises the estimates referred to the committee and highlights some of the issues the committee examined.

The committee considered the estimates referred to it by using information contained in:

- budget papers
- answers to pre-hearing questions on notice
- evidence taken at the hearing
- answers to questions taken on notice at the public hearing
- additional information provided in relation to answers given at the public hearing.

Prior to the public hearing, the committee provided questions on notice to the Minister for Health and Ambulance Services and the Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for

¹ *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*, s 88 and Standing Order 194.

² Standing Order 177 provides for the automatic referral of the Annual Appropriation Bills to portfolio committees once the Bills have been read a second time.

³ <https://www.parliament.qld.gov.au/Work-of-Committees/Committees/Committee-Details?cid=169&id=4177>

Science and Youth Affairs in relation to the estimates for their portfolios. The committee received responses to all of its questions.

Answers to the committee’s pre-hearing questions on notice, documents tabled during the hearing, answers to questions taken on notice, and additional information provided by Minister D’ath after the hearing are included in a volume of additional information tabled with this report.

1.4 Participation by other Members

The committee granted leave for other Members to participate in the hearing in accordance with Standing Order 181(e). The following Members participated in the hearing:

- Mr David Crisafulli MP, Member for Broadwater
- Ms Rosslyn (Ros) Bates MP RN, Member for Mudgeeraba
- Mr Michael Berkman MP, Member for Maiwar
- Dr Amy MacMahon, Member for South Brisbane.

1.5 Recommendation

Pursuant to Standing Order 187(1), the committee must state whether the proposed expenditures referred to it are agreed to.

Recommendation 1

The committee recommends that the proposed expenditure, as detailed in the Appropriation Bill 2022 for the committee’s areas of responsibility, be agreed to by the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

2 Minister for Health and Ambulance Services

The Minister for Health and Ambulance Services, Hon Yvette D'Ath MP, has responsibility for Queensland Health, which is comprised of:

- the Department of Health
- 16 Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) situated throughout Queensland
- the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS).

In addition, the Minister is responsible for:

- The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR Berghofer)
- the Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC)
- the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO)
- Health and Wellbeing Queensland.⁴

2.1 Budget overview – Queensland Health

The Bill proposes that Queensland Health receive appropriation revenue of \$13.846 billion for controlled items in 2022-23.⁵ The remaining \$8.202 billion in revenue required to fund expenditure on controlled items in 2022-23 will be sourced from user charges and fees (\$1.645 billion), grants and other contributions (\$6.445 billion), other revenue (\$107.622 million), interest and distributions from managed funds (\$2.486 million), and gains on the sale/revaluation of assets (\$1.072 million).⁶

Queensland Health also oversees administered revenue and expenses. The Bill includes appropriation revenue of \$71.129 million for Queensland Health's administered items in 2022-23, a decrease of \$6.083 million on the 2021-22 budget.⁷

Table 1 below compares the appropriations for Queensland Health for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Table 1: Queensland Health - Appropriations for 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriations	Budget 2021–2022 \$'000	Est. Actual 2021–2022 \$'000	Vote 2022-2023 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	12,714,683	12,508,755	13,831,521
equity adjustment	272,460	127,808	350,776
<i>Administered Items</i>	77,212	71,381	71,129
Vote	13,064,355	12,707,944	14,253,426

Source: Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 16.

The total budgeted expenditure on controlled items in 2022-23 for Queensland Health, which includes the Department of Health, the HHSs, and the QAS, is \$22.044 billion. This figure is an increase of \$1.159 billion on the 2021-22 budget, and a \$443.848 million increase on estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.⁸ According to the Queensland Health Service Delivery Statements (SDS), the increased expenditure for controlled items reflects workforce requirements to meet the ongoing growth in

⁴ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 1.

⁵ Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 16.

⁶ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 16.

⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 12.

⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 12.

demand for frontline health services, including the ongoing response to and management of COVID-19, enterprise bargaining agreements, and increased depreciation.⁹

Total budgeted expenditure in 2022-23 by service areas within Queensland Health, the HHSs, and the QAS is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Queensland Health, Hospital and Health Services, and Queensland Ambulance Service - Resources applied by service area in 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriations	Budget 2021–22 \$ billion	Est. Actual 2021–22 \$ billion	Budget 2022-23 \$ billion
Inpatient Care	9.859	10.193	10.229
Outpatient Care	2.485	2.569	2.626
Emergency Care	2.014	2.082	2.270
Sub and Non-Accute Care	0.901	0.932	1.021
Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Services	2.109	2.181	2.185
Prevention, Primary and Community Care	2.528	2.613	2.616
Ambulance Services	0.988	1.031	1.098
Total expenses	20.885	21.601	22.044

Source: Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, 'Health consolidated budget summary', p 12.

2.1.1 Budget highlights

The Queensland Health SDS note the following 2022–23 budget highlights:

- additional funding of \$6.784 billion over 4 years to support ongoing growth in demand for health and ambulance services
- \$1.645 billion and a capital investment of \$28.5 million over 5 years for a new 5-year plan for state funded mental health, alcohol and other drugs services and for initiatives to improve the mental health, alcohol and other drugs system of care and support, which is to be funded by a new mental health levy proposed to commence from 1 January 2023
- additional funding of \$300 million over 5 years for the continuing roll-out of electronic medical record functionality
- \$90 million over 3 years for the next tranche of the Infrastructure Maintenance Program
- in Queensland Health's capital program for 2022-23, additional funding of \$9.785 billion over 6 years for new hospitals and hospital expansion projects to deliver 2,509 extra beds in addition to the 869 beds being delivered through current expansion projects.¹⁰

2.1.2 Capital program

The Queensland Health capital program budget in 2022-23 is \$1.537 billion, an increase of \$185.298 million on capital expenditure in 2021-22.¹¹ The 2022-23 capital program budget is primarily for the construction, expansion and refurbishment of hospital and health facilities (84%), and also includes outlays for health technology, research and scientific services, mental health services, staff

⁹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 15.

¹⁰ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 2.

¹¹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 14.

accommodation, and digital works and information technology services.¹² Capital purchases of \$81.773 million for QAS infrastructure includes ambulance stations and vehicles, information and communications technology, and operational equipment.¹³

The capital program also provides for capital investment of \$5.11 million for QIMR Berghofer to purchase new and/or replacement scientific equipment and research facilities.¹⁴

2.1.3 Hospital and Health Services

Table 3 below compares the total operating expenditure for each HHS in 2022-23 and in the previous financial year.

Table 3: Expenditure by Hospital and Health Services in 2021-22 and 2022-23

Hospital and Health Service	2021-22 Budget \$'000	2022-23 Budget \$ '000	Change from 2021-22 to 2022-23 (%)
Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service	1,081,274	1,179,098	9.05
Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service	691,404	753,756	9.02
Central West Hospital and Health Service	89,938	93,569	4.04
Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service	898,084	932,426	3.82
Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service	937,178	1,009,862	7.76
Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service	1,773,837	1,944,396	9.62
Mackay Hospital and Health Service	514,581	562,168	9.25
Metro North Hospital and Health Service	3,364,482	3,616,845	7.50
Metro South Hospital and Health Service	2,776,258	3,022,541	8.87
North West Hospital and Health Service	207,656	220,153	6.02
South West Hospital and Health Service	169,707	181,332	6.85
Sunshine Coast Hospital and Health Service	1,364,628	1,454,170	6.56
Torres and Cape Hospital and Health Service	250,023	276,889	10.75
Townsville Hospital and Health Service	1,129,166	1,202,952	6.53
West Moreton Hospital and Health Service	750,488	817,020	8.87
Wide Bay Hospital and Health Service	724,910	771,936	6.49

Source: Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, pp 39-143.

2.1.4 Queensland Ambulance Service

The QAS operates within Queensland Health, providing pre-hospital ambulance response services, emergency and non-emergency pre-hospital patient care and transport services, inter-facility ambulance transport, casualty room services, and planning and coordination of multi-casualty incidents and disasters in Queensland.¹⁵ The QAS delivers ambulance services from 302 response locations in Queensland which are coordinated through 8 operations centres.¹⁶

¹² Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, pp 77-86.

¹³ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, pp 81-82.

¹⁴ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, p 82.

¹⁵ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 30.

¹⁶ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 29.

Included in the Queensland Health budget for 2022-23 is expenditure by the QAS of \$1.098 billion. This figure is an increase of \$109.214 million (11%) on the budgeted expenditure by the QAS in 2021-22.¹⁷

The SDS note the following ‘key deliverables’ for the QAS in 2022-23:

- the government’s commitment for an additional 535 ambulance operatives during this term of government will continue to be fulfilled
- commissioning of an additional 4 Mental Health Co-responder services in the Darling Downs, Mackay, Wide Bay and Sunshine Coast HHSs
- expansion of the QAS Clinical Hub which provides a secondary triage for Code 2 patients
- commissioning of 130 new and replacement ambulance vehicles
- progressing the planning and construction phases for new ambulance stations at Caloundra South, Petrie (Lawnton), Morayfield, Ormeau, the new Ripley Ambulance Station and West Moreton District Office, replacement of the North Rockhampton Ambulance Station and Central Regional Office, and the new Burdell Ambulance Station and Townsville District Office
- undertaking planning and construction phases for the redevelopment of the Cairns Ambulance Station and Operations Centre, the Southport Ambulance Station and Gold Coast Operations Centre, and the completion of the refurbishment of the Rockhampton Ambulance Station and Operations Centre.¹⁸

2.2 The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research

The QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute is controlled and managed by The Council of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. The objectives of QIMR Berghofer are to support ground-breaking research discoveries, to promote a world-class, collaborative, and sustainable research environment, and to achieve impactful medical research. QIMR Berghofer research programs are focussed on cancer, infectious diseases, inflammation, genetics of diseases, mental health and neuroscience, population health, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.¹⁹

2.2.1 Budget overview

QIMR Berghofer’s operating expenditure in 2022-23 is estimated to be \$142.653 million, an increase of \$24.313 million on the budgeted expenditure for 2021-22. Similar to previous years, employee expenses (54%) and supplies and services (31%) make up the majority of expenditure for 2022-23. An operating deficit of \$6.926 million is forecast for the financial year.²⁰

2.3 Queensland Mental Health Commission

The QMHC is an independent statutory body established under the *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013*. The role of the QMHC is to drive ongoing reform to create a more integrated, evidence-based, recovery-oriented mental health, drugs and substance misuse system in Queensland by developing a whole-of-government strategic plan for mental health, alcohol and other drugs services, care and support, by monitoring, reviewing and reporting on issues for people affected by mental health or substance misuse issues, and by promoting prevention, early intervention and community awareness strategies.²¹

¹⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 31.

¹⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 29.

¹⁹ QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, *Strategic Plan 2022-2026*, <https://www.qimrberghofer.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/QIMR-Berghofers-2022-2026-Strategic-Plan.pdf>, p 4.

²⁰ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 148.

²¹ *Queensland Mental Health Commission Act 2013*, s 4.

2.3.1 Budget overview

The QMHC's operating budget for 2022-23 is \$8.897 million, a decrease of \$0.586 million on the budget for 2021-22. Most of the QMHC's estimated expenditure in 2022-23 will be on employee expenses (41%), supplies and services (30%), and grants and subsidies (27%).²²

2.4 Office of the Health Ombudsman

The OHO is an independent body established under the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013* to protect the health and safety of the public and promote professional, safe and competent practice by health practitioners and high standards in health service delivery.²³

The OHO receives and investigates complaints about health services and health service providers, decides what action to take in relation to those complaints, and monitors the health, conduct and performance functions of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and national health practitioner boards.²⁴

2.4.1 Budget overview

The 2022-23 operating budget for the OHO is \$24.031 million, which is an increase of \$1.540 million on the budget for 2021-22. The majority of the OHO's 2022-23 budget is allocated to employee expenses (85%) and supplies and services (14.8%).²⁵

2.5 Health and Wellbeing Queensland

Health and Wellbeing Queensland is an independent statutory body which was established under the *Health and Wellbeing Act 2019* to improve the health and wellbeing of the Queensland population by reducing the burden of chronic diseases through targeting risk factors for those diseases and reducing health inequity.²⁶ Health and Wellbeing Queensland works in partnership with communities, the private sector and government agencies to develop policy and actions to prevent illness and promote health and wellbeing.²⁷

2.5.1 Budget overview

Health and Wellbeing Queensland's operating budget for 2022-23 is \$38.805 million, a decrease of \$7.124 million on the 2021-22 budget. As in previous years, most of Health and Wellbeing Queensland's estimated expenditure in 2022-23 will be on supplies and services (78%).²⁸

2.6 Issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee at its public hearing in relation to the budget estimates for 2022-23 for the portfolio areas of Health and Ambulance Services included:

- the readiness of the Queensland health system for the COVID-19 pandemic
- Queensland Health targets for ambulance ramping, and the incidence of hospital bypass by ambulances/diversion of ambulances to clinical services
- the government's financial obligation in relation to the Aspen Medical contract at the Queensland Regional Accommodation Centre at Wellcamp
- the inclusion of information on targets for the treatment of Category 1 and 3 elective surgery patients within clinically recommended times in Budget papers

²² Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 154.

²³ *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*, s 3.

²⁴ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 158.

²⁵ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 160.

²⁶ *Health and Wellbeing Act 2019*, s 10.

²⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, pp 163-164.

²⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Queensland Health, p 166.

- changes to performance measures for patient off stretcher times
- the number of patients who were in emergency departments for longer than 24 hours before being discharged or admitted in 2021-22
- timeframe for new satellite hospitals to be operational, the cost of the satellite hospital project, and whether the satellite hospitals will have overnight beds or emergency departments or will operate as hospital facilities
- the Department of Health's process for awarding contracts
- the number and cost of contracts awarded to Aspen Medical
- the impact of supply shortages of medicines or other medical products on Queensland hospitals
- the number of abortions performed in government and non-government facilities in 2021-22 and the overall cost to Queensland Health
- how Queensland Health has addressed recent demands on the health system
- strategies to support capacity and flow of emergency departments
- government investment to expand the nursing and clinical workforce
- government investment in health facilities in North and Far North Queensland
- matters related to the Commission of Inquiry into DNA Testing Conducted by Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services
- matters related to the investigation of Dr William Braun by the Office of the Health Ombudsman
- the Minister's meetings with the Health Ombudsman
- nurses' wages
- the review of the policy regarding the recovery of medical costs, including STI tests, pathology tests, MRIs, and treatment for injuries, for Medicare-ineligible sexual assault victims
- the action plan for easier access to abortion services in public hospitals and HHSs
- benefits of COVID mandates, the safety and effectiveness of the vaccine rollout, and the timeframe for the public health emergency declaration to be lifted
- strategies to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at the Ekka in 2022
- the benefits of the satellite hospitals program for South-East Queensland
- the appointment of the Acting Director-General of Queensland Health, previous roles, and the nature of the Acting Director-General's involvement in a CCC investigation into the conduct of Queensland Health staff
- QAS lost time in the Metro North region to the end of June 2022
- investigations being undertaken in relation to the Metro North HHS, including the number of surgical deaths prior to June 2020 that are part of a current surgical services review investigation
- a current review of obstetrics and gynaecology at Caboolture Hospital
- harm reduction initiatives to reduce Hepatitis transmission in prisons
- drug checking/pill testing at music festivals
- potential benefits of decriminalising possession of small quantities of illicit drugs as a harm reduction measure
- possible benefits of alternative vaccines for COVID-19
- government investment in health facilities in the Wide Bay, Darling Downs, Mackay and Central Queensland regions
- allied health initiatives and programs being implemented by HHSs over the next 4 years

- Queensland Health programs to prevent illness and injury, address health problems and protect the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders
- details of a health service investigation and clinical reviews of incidents in the Wide Bay HHS
- funding in the 2022-23 budget for the hospital to be built in Bundaberg by 2027
- the performance of emergency departments in Bundaberg, Maryborough and Hervey Bay hospitals
- clinical services for the prevention of Rheumatic Heart Disease
- the timeframe for the completion of the investigation into the Mackay hospital obstetrics and gynaecology department
- the nature of the health care that is provided to patients of the Metro North COVID virtual ward
- government investment in Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast hospitals and children's health services
- the provision of information and written advice by Queensland Health staff
- the measurement and collection of data on patient off stretcher time
- the amount of ambulance lost time from January to June 2022; the collection of annual data on ambulance lost time
- the number of significant incident reviews conducted by the QAS in the last financial year, including the number of matters involving the coroner, and whether matters are ongoing
- processes and infrastructure to support local ambulance service network
- ambulance response times in the Marian area
- flexible work arrangements and rosters for QAS staff
- alleged wheelchair theft from Queensland hospitals
- the number of ambulances normally available at night time in north Brisbane
- government investment in the QAS workforce
- the QAS Mental Health Co responder program
- 2022-23 budget plans for new and replacement ambulance stations
- the delivery of the Indigenous Paramedic Program
- appointment of the QAS Deputy Commissioner
- work of the critical care paramedic unit in Caboolture
- the number of vacancies currently within the QAS, and whether there has been a build-up in accumulated leave of QAS staff since the beginning of the pandemic.²⁹

²⁹ Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 July 2022, pp 1-51.

3 Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs

The Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef and Minister for Science and Youth Affairs, Hon Meaghan Scanlon MP, has responsibility for the Department of Environment and Science (DES) which comprises the following service areas:

- Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services
- Environmental Programs and Regulation Services
- Science Services
- Heritage Protection Services
- Youth Engagement.³⁰

3.1 Budget overview – Department of Environment and Science

The Bill proposes that the DES receive appropriation revenue of \$597.184 million for controlled items in 2022-23.³¹ An additional \$156.837 million in revenue required to fund expenditure on controlled items in 2022-23 will be predominantly sourced from user charges and fees (\$105.225 million), grants and other contributions (\$48.380 million), and royalties and land rents (\$2.013 million).³²

Table 4 below compares the appropriations for the DES for 2021-22 and 2022-23.

Table 4: Department of Environment and Science - Appropriations for 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriations	Budget 2021–2022 \$'000	Est. Actual 2021–2022 \$'000	Vote 2022-2023 \$'000
<i>Controlled Items</i>			
departmental services	682,105	1,317,020	597,184
equity adjustment	44,978	33,278	428
<i>Administered Items</i>
Vote	727,083	1,350,298	597,612

Source: Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 10.

The total budgeted expenditure on controlled items in 2022-23 for the DES is \$749.794 million. This figure is a decrease of \$82.476 million on the 2021-22 budget, and a \$740.938 million decrease from the estimated actual expenditure in 2021-22.³³

The DES SDS states that the decrease in expenditure for controlled items ‘is primarily due to payments to councils to mitigate impacts on households from the Waste Disposal Levy’ and the end of limited-life programs in 2022–23 ‘including Underground Coal Gasification Investigations as well as completion of a number of externally funded programs related to disaster recovery’.³⁴ The SDS state that ‘these reductions are partially offset by increases in expenditure in 2022–23 for programs related to Great Barrier Reef water quality improvement, koala and wildlife conservation, climate change, protected area estate management and science programs’.³⁵

³⁰ Queensland Budget 2021-21, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 1.

³¹ Appropriation Bill 2022, Schedule 2, p 16.

³² Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 14.

³³ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 11.

³⁴ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 13.

³⁵ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 13.

Total budgeted expenditure by service areas within the DES in 2022-23 is shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Department of Environment and Science - Resources applied by service area in 2021-22 and 2022-23

Appropriations	Budget 2021–22 \$ million	Est. Actual 2021–22 \$ million	Budget 2022–23 \$ million
Parks, Wildlife and Conservation Services	345.656	364.567	368.827
Environmental Programs and Regulation Services	384.139	1 016.049	268.155
Science Services	88.397	96.952	98.076
Heritage Protection Services	8.923	7.036	8.872
Youth Engagement	3.168	4.237	4.321
Business Corporate Partnership	1.987	1.891	1.543
Total expenses	832.270	1 490.732	749.794

Source: Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, 'Departmental budget summary', p 11.

The DES also collects administered income on behalf of the state, including the Queensland waste levy, which is paid to the consolidated fund. Administered income is estimated to be \$349.284 million in 2022-23. This figure is \$8.277 million more than estimated actual administered income in 2021-22, primarily as a result of an increase in revenue from waste levy rate increases.³⁶

3.1.1 Budget highlights – Department of Environment and Science

The DES SDS outline the budget highlights for 2022-23 which include:

- \$964.2 million over 5 years as part of the 10-year \$2.1 billion waste package to support councils and industry to invest in infrastructure to deliver programs to reduce waste and meet resource recovery targets
- \$262.5 million over 4 years for the continuation of the Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030 for land acquisitions and capital works to increase Queensland's public protected area estate
- \$38.5 million over 4 years, and \$1.2 million per year ongoing, to support the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution Program, including the transfer of land to First Nations peoples, joint management arrangements on Cape York Peninsula Aboriginal land (CYPAL), and management of Springvale Station Nature Refuge
- \$32.6 million, including \$4.8 million per year ongoing, to build the Queensland Government's climate science and emissions analysis, modelling and projections capability and deliver a pilot program for communities to reduce emissions
- \$24.6 million over 4 years, and \$1 million per year ongoing, to extend and accelerate implementation of the South East Queensland Koala Conservation Strategy 2020–2025 including increasing support for the South East Queensland Wildlife Hospital Network
- \$14.7 million over 4 years, and \$1 million per year ongoing, to implement the Threatened Species Program, focusing on the assessment, protection and recovery of species most at risk of extinction

³⁶ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, pp 13, 17.

- \$3.5 million over 5 years for the development and enforcement of industry decarbonisation plans.³⁷

3.1.2 Capital program

The DES capital program budget in 2022-23 is \$54.896 million. According to the Capital Statement, the government has also set aside an additional \$250 million over 4 years (including \$25 million in 2022–23), held centrally, for land acquisitions and capital works to support the Protected Area Strategy 2020–2030.³⁸

The capital program in 2022-23 provides for total capital purchases by the DES of \$51.161 million, a decrease of \$6.082 million on the budgeted expenditure on capital works in 2021-22,³⁹ and for capital grants of \$3.735, including \$3.644 for the Newstead House capital works.⁴⁰

Capital purchases by the DES in 2022-23 include \$33.377 million for capital works to upgrade visitor infrastructure in national parks including Whitsunday Islands, Magnetic Island and Bunya Mountains National Parks. Capital purchases by the department will also include:

- \$7.970 million for plant and equipment, including \$1.618 million towards marine parks major vessel replacements
- \$6.544 million towards system development, including \$2.799 million towards the Government Science Platform.⁴¹

3.2 Issues raised during consideration of budget estimates

Issues raised and considered by the committee at its public hearing in relation to the budget estimates for 2022-23 for the portfolio areas of Environment, Great Barrier Reef, Science and Youth Affairs included:

- koala conservation, research and restoration, including the option of establishing a native animal genomics laboratory
- the number of properties, and total land area, identified for acquisition in 2022-23 as part of the Queensland Protected Area Strategy, and the timeframe for expenditure on acquisitions
- funding for management of the protected area estate
- funding for management of private protected areas and the number of applications from landholders in 2021-22
- guidelines for management of private protected areas by landholders and funding available for management costs under the Nature Refuge Landholder Grants Programs and the NatureAssist program
- federal government involvement and funding commitments in relation to Queensland's protected area estate
- consultation with the DES by the Department of Transport and Main Roads in relation environmental offsets required for the Coomera Connector project
- the value of expenditure to date from the Land Restoration Fund, and the timeframe for the program funds to be fully expended
- planning in relation to the carbon potential of the protected area estate

³⁷ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 3.

³⁸ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, p 62.

³⁹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Service Delivery Statements, Department of Environment and Science, p 12.

⁴⁰ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, pp 64-65.

⁴¹ Queensland Budget 2022-23, Capital Statement, pp 63-64.

- partnerships with First Nations people in national park stewardship and conservation of protected areas
- national park stewardship programs for Australian South Sea Islander people
- the status of the Pioneer Valley Mountain Bike Trail project
- whether the position of the DES regarding scope 3 emissions in the Waratah Coal case will be reflected more broadly in government policy
- the cost of rehabilitation as estimated in the Enforceable Undertaking between the DES and New Acland Coal
- the cost of the environmental harm caused by unauthorised clearing and land disturbance at the New Acland Coal West Pit
- current and future actions being taken by the DES in relation to the Cleanaway site at New Chum
- progress of the review of the Bribie Island visitor management plan
- capital works being undertaken across the protected area estate
- planning for the delivery of protected areas funding including potential properties and partnership arrangements
- progress in regard to the DES's commitment to being carbon neutral by 2030
- the provision of information and written advice by DES staff
- the reasons for the Minister's former Chief of Staff leaving the Minister's office
- federal government funding for the Great Barrier Reef Foundation
- funding for SmartCane program and scheduled end of the program
- the review of the Farming in Reef Catchments Rebate Scheme and reallocation of unspent funds from the discontinued scheme
- the numbers of rangers and support staff in Brisbane, and reductions in the numbers of rangers in Darling Downs, Logan, Beaudesert, Moreton Bay South, Brisbane East and the outback
- Queensland's 2030 emissions reduction target, current carbon emissions, the trajectory for the reduction of emissions, and the use emissions modelling and climate projections
- land rehabilitation bonds for solar and wind projects in Queensland
- the timeframe for the completion of the review and reform of the environmental offsets framework
- progress towards a climate-positive Brisbane Olympics and Paralympics
- the social and environmental benefits of the container deposit scheme
- benefits of the extension of the Reef Assist program
- initiatives to improve support for disadvantaged young people
- the creation of youth foyers throughout Queensland
- efforts to address issues in rental accommodation for young people
- use of the Water Tracking and Electronic Reporting System to monitor waste releases from waste facilities
- recommendations of the Chief Scientist to the Queensland Government to improve Queenslanders' interest in science in light of the results of the *Queenslanders' perceptions and attitudes to science* report
- the amount paid to Kantar Public to conduct the survey of Queenslanders' attitudes to science
- the composition of the Queensland Youth Strategy Engagement Group

- timeframe for the publication of the next youth strategy
- progress towards the government’s commitment to improving access to safe, accessible and affordable homes and the delivery of programs to assist housing security for young people
- the timing of the publication of the report on the Statewide Landcover and Trees Study
- the consistency of Queensland’s net zero by 2050 emissions reduction target with Australia’s obligations under the Paris Agreement
- funding in the 2022-23 budget for science to support research and commercialization in universities
- progress toward delivery of a new youth homelessness strategy
- the outcome of the expert review into Queensland’s Crocodile Management Program
- progress of investigations into sea wrack in Moreton Bay
- budget initiatives to address mental health issues for young people.⁴²

⁴² Public hearing transcript, Brisbane, 29 July 2022, pp 52-83.

Statements of Reservation

Statement of Reservation

Introduction

Opposition members of the Committee agree with the passing of the 2022/23 Budget.

However, the Budget is characterised by numerous shortcomings which have failed to meet the expectations of Queenslanders. Many of these shortcomings became increasingly evident during the Estimates process.

The Budget was an opportunity for the government to show Queenslanders they have listened to them. It was a chance to open the books and show Queenslanders they have been heard. It was a chance to reveal the true state of affairs and what will be done to make their lives just a little easier.

The Estimates process failed to provide reassurance that the great challenges facing Queenslanders were being addressed – the health crisis, the housing crisis, the youth crime crisis, the cost of living crisis and the integrity crisis.

Estimates revealed a host of band aid solutions that will do little to improve conditions throughout Queensland. Coupled with a litany of cost overruns and government financial waste – no better demonstrated than by the loss of over \$220 million of taxpayers' funds on the Wellcamp vanity project – no long-term solutions were presented by the government.

Despite its inherent imperfections, the Estimates process drew attention to government neglect and waste and a cavalier disregard for the highest standards of probity and integrity in government.

Health and QAS

Queensland is in the middle of a hospital crisis and details disclosed during the estimates hearings show how bad the problems really are.

Ambulance ramping has grown again to 45%- three times what it was when Labor came to office. Concerningly, the Minister and department presented no plan to get it back down to the level they inherited.

Ambulance bypass is back. A hospital goes into bypass when they have no spare capacity to accept new patients. Despite claims by the government to the contrary, ambulance logs obtained by the Opposition under RTI show that ambulances are bypassing hospitals. This can impact patient care.

Category 2 and 3 elective surgery patients will find no comfort in knowing that the government has no target on how many will have their surgery within the recommended timeframe.

An alarming statistic obtained under questioning was that 12,252 people last financial year spent more than 24 hours in an emergency department waiting for admission or discharge. New hospital

beds are needed to fix this problem, but with less than 1% of Labor's hospital building budget to be spent in 2022/23, relief is many years away.

An example is Bundaberg where a new level 5 hospital was promised prior to the last state election. Of the \$1.2 billion cost, only \$20 million will be spent this year and there was no commitment that it would be a level 5 hospital on opening.

The much-touted satellite hospital program is running late, is over budget and none of them will have overnight beds or emergency department. Queenslanders want to know why, if this government can't build fake hospitals on time and on budget, why should they be trusted to build real ones?

Last year in our Statement of Reservation to proposed health spending for the 21-22 financial year, the LNP raised concern with the reduction some HHSs saw in the FTE count and budget compared to what was spent, or reconciled, in the previous financial year.

History is now repeating itself with the Labor Government promising better government services while reducing the FTE count and budgets for HHSs when compared to what was spent in the 21-22 financial year. From those Queenslanders experiencing the Queensland Health Crisis first-hand, it would seem an anathema for Labor to say they can improve the health system while ripping money and staff out of the system.

Despite the best efforts of frontline professionals, the system is in crisis and patient care is suffering. In Metro North alone there are currently 12 investigations underway. We've heard of issues at Bundaberg hospital regarding medication dispensing, people have died in our First Nations communities from treatable diseases and the report into investigations at Mackay's obstetrics and gynaecology department has been delayed again.

In March 2021, the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) published a report in, *Planning for sustainable health services*, which outlined massive gaps in Labor's planning for the future of Queensland's health system.

The report identified large deficits in Queensland Health's plans for future health services and workforce. These deficiencies are not addressed in this budget and the estimates process did not uncover any plan to fix these issues. It's clear there is no plan from this Labor Government to fix the health system and improve patient care.

Questions must be asked about those in charge at Queensland Health. Is an ongoing CCC investigation involving the Acting Director-General impacting the ability of the department to deliver frank and fearless advice? Or is the government's playbook for integrity issues determining how matters are dealt with?

The issues at that Queensland's forensics services lab can be used as a case study. The government first denied there was a problem (deflect). Then they announced a powerless inquiry (distract). Then documents appeared to show that the department was looking into ways to silence those who tried to raise problems (attack). It would seem that the integrity playbook is certainly in use.

Now we do have a proper Commission of Inquiry, we find that the costs for it must come from the forensic service's own budget, which will impact their ability to deliver vital forensic services.

Victims of crime in Queensland may not get the justice they deserve because of this and previous decisions of this government.

All these matters show that Queensland Health is in crisis and Labor's failure to admit that there is a problem, failure to release up-to-date data, and failure to implement a proper solution should concern every Queenslanders.

Environment

This Budget Estimates was again frustrating for the non-government members with the usual limited amount of time permitted for asking questions of the Minister and the Department.

However, we would like to place on record new information we found about key environmental initiatives showing the State Government's failure to achieve outcomes.

Conservation

The biggest announcement of the State Budget was the \$250 million allocated for expanding Queensland's protected area estate.

Little detail was provided in Budget Week so through Estimates we were able to find out two key issues with this conservation funding; despite all the attention given to the announcement half of this funding is not scheduled to be delivered until the end of the forward estimates in four years' time, and there is no portion of allocated funding to improving management of our conservation areas.

This is the first significant amount of funding committed by the State Government to achieve the target of protecting 17% of Queensland's land area they set back in 2015.

With such a large portion of it allocated in 2025-2026, that means it will have taken the State Government a decade and three state elections to deliver tangible progress on a target they set of themselves. That progress is currently barely noticeable with the percentage of Queensland's land area protected being the same as it was five years ago at 8.21%, the lowest of any jurisdiction in Australia.

Private Protected Areas

Incentivising landholders to take part in the private protected areas scheme is a key way in which we can better protect more of our state.

Estimates revealed the management of these private protected areas falls critically short. Although this is admittedly a way of presenting the issue that does not fully reflect how private protected areas should be funded, a pre-hearing question on notice showed an average of \$0.36 per hectare is provided to landholders to support the care and management of their protected areas; just \$1.6 million dollars of budget allocation.

In 2021-22 10,486 hectares in the form of 12 nature refuges were added to the private protected areas network. Just 16 applications were received in the most recent round of management

funding with only 12 independent approaches from landholders to include their property or parts of it for conservation in the last financial year.

This all shows there is very little incentive for private landholders to take part in this program.

If we are serious about protecting more of our state's unrivalled biodiversity, we need to do better at this. The State Government alone will not be able to and should not acquire what we need to meaningfully conserve Queensland; it must work better with private landholders and in particular our primary producers to have this goal work hand in hand with utilising our prime agricultural land for food and fibre production.

Rangers and Management

While the LNP welcomes the Government finally taking some action on their seven-year-old protected areas target, this expansion needs to be hand in hand with management.

The Government already struggles to manage the lands currently classified as conservation areas. Having large areas of land act as breeding grounds for feral animals and weeds does nothing to protect our unique environment.

More detail should be provided on the ways in which investments will be made in improved management. Surely confirmation could be given that it will at least be in line with the increases in conservation areas.

The Department is struggling to recruit rangers in a number of areas including Brisbane – East, Darling Downs and the Outback, with all three areas having fewer rangers on the ground than they did five years ago.

Land Restoration Fund

The \$500 million Land Restoration Fund, which the Premier recently described as having been “delivered”, has only expended \$4.77 million to date.

While it is recognised this is a long-term fund, only one third has been allocated and it will take 15 years for that to be expended. The Government was unable to provide any detail of when the fund would be fully ‘delivered’.

Koala Research Facility

The Minister appeared to be unwilling to advocate for Queensland's first native animal genomics lab to be established with the millions the State Government has already paid Dreamworld to set it up, instead shifting the blame to Tourism Minister for the State Government's decision to allow re-purposing that funding for the lab into building the Steel Taipan rollercoaster.

This is despite the now-Environment Minister giving a glowing endorsement of the lab at the announcement for it nearly three years ago, saying:

“It will be the first of its kind in our state and will enhance the research capabilities of experts at the University of Queensland by allowing researchers and science undergraduates up-close contact with animals in the field.”

When asked if the Department had 'any involvement in the Future Lab project', the Director-General said "no", even when clarification was sought about whether he meant in a decision-making capacity or just 'advisory or any other involvement'.

Curiously, the then-Environment Minister was included in the press release for this project.

Having a minister provide glowing feedback about a project related to their portfolio without their department being involved in even a broad role for that project is an extraordinary situation showing how little substance there is to these announcements.

The most disappointing thing of this whole situation is that in the same time koalas have now been classified as endangered, it seems no one in the State Government thought to push the proposal further.

The Premier herself said she expects Dreamworld to "do the right thing" as if somehow her government was not the one who allowed this research funding to be redirected into a rollercoaster with no questions asked in the more than two years since.

It again goes to the pattern of this government to focus on the environmental announcement and not the delivery.

Great Barrier Reef

The Minister disappointingly did not provide support for the Great Barrier Reef Foundation, despite her department working with it on many projects to protect our greatest natural asset, with the continuation of their funding under threat from the new Federal Government.

It was strange for the Minister to raise media controversy surrounding the organisation despite the fact her own department partners with them.

The Government confirmed it gives just \$1.4 million per year to Smartcane Best Management Practice (BMP) to improve the farming practices of growers in reef catchments but gave no confirmation about whether the State Government would continue this funding beyond March 2023 and certainly no commitment to increase the support provided.

This is a successfully, industry-led best practice program that meets and beats the Reef Regulations. The LNP firmly believes funding should be increased substantially to help more cane farmers to join and be supported to reduce their environment impact (and therefore their growing costs) while increasing their yields.

We did find out the State Government had supported more than the initial four farmers through the failed Farming in Reef Catchments Rebate Scheme and have now supported eleven. This means \$9.989 million allocated to support farmers was remaining. We found out it was redirected into other similar schemes but surely some could have been allocated to assisting BMP programs like Smartcane.

It makes the State Government's failure to commit to continuing support for this successful CANEGROWERS program even more galling.

Net Zero by 2030 for DES Operations

The LNP welcomes the Department's commitment to make their operations net zero by 2030 at the latest. This is something we have questioned the Director-General about in previous hearings and in the Budget Reply debate in parliament.

As this is the Department responsible for tracking Queensland's progress on emissions reduction and our action on climate change, it is important they lead by example.

Further analysis should be made on the broader operations of the Queensland Government to see where the Department can advise other departments on achieving net zero.

Science and Youth

When it comes to Science and Youth the Minister appeared reluctant to take any responsibility for activities in these areas. Questions about the 'regional science and innovation hubs' were avoided, with the Director-General claiming the department wasn't responsible for those hubs.

This was corrected at the end of the session with the Director-General confirming the hubs are a partnership with the Chief Scientist and the Department of Innovation.

Despite spending almost \$30,000 on research to gauge the public perceptions of science, the Government won't set any targets of what they are trying to achieve in this area.

The Queensland Youth Strategy (2017-2022) lists as part of Building Block 2 that the "Queensland Government will improve access to safe, accessible and affordable homes and deliver programs and resources to assist our young people to maintain housing security."

When questioned as to whether the Government had failed this given the current crisis, the Minister could not directly answer, saying it is a *"really complex problem"*.

Further questions on issues such as waste diversion, seeking more details on resource recovery funding, single-use plastics, bushfire mitigation, heritage protection and further clarity on the Land Restoration Fund and protected areas were unable to be raised.

Considering so few topics were able to be properly canvassed in the earlier sessions, thought needs to be given to the time allocation given to the last session, especially factoring in how miniscule the budgetary allocation for 'Youth' is. Many topics raised in the various 'Youth' and 'Science' strategies and reports put out by the Department are just passed off as being the responsibility of another department. That makes questioning in the final session difficult.

Conclusion

Having questioned ministers and officials throughout the Estimates process the Opposition does not believe the Budget presented a sustainable solution to the significant problems facing the Queensland economy and Queenslanders.

Just as ambulance ramping and hospital waiting times were at critical levels last year, housing shortages continue to exist throughout the entire state, crime rates continue to increase, and critical infrastructure remained underfunded.

The 2022/23 Budget was a lost opportunity that will make the lives of Queenslanders even more difficult in the coming years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam O'Connor', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sam O'Connor MP

Shadow Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef
Shadow Minister for Science and Innovation
Shadow Minister for Youth
Member for Bonney

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rob Molhoek', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rob Molhoek MP

Deputy Chair
Member for Southport

**ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE—ENVIRONMENT
AND THE GREAT BARRIER REEF; SCIENCE AND YOUTH AFFAIRS**

STATEMENT OF RESERVATION – STEPHEN ANDREW, MEMBER FOR MIRANI

The Budget estimates process provides the major opportunity for Parliament, through the Committee, to assess the performance of the Queensland Health and Environment public sector and the administration of the government's policies and programs.

Problems with the present system

There are a number of problems with the present Estimates process, but I just wish to mention one or two here.

The Health and Environment portfolios are extremely significant and impactful portfolios that are not allocated nearly enough time during these hearings.

Moreover, the time allocated to the vitally important portfolio of Environment, the Great Barrier Reef, Science and Youth Affairs is woefully inadequate.

The timeframe given did not take into account the diversity or complexity of the functions to be reviewed ie Department of Environment and Science encompasses a wide range of hugely complex areas within the Minister's portfolio, that are of significant importance to regional Queenslanders.

On average, individual Committee Members only get to ask three or four questions at each estimates hearing before the emphasis is put purely on political issues.

This means there is little to no opportunity to ask follow-up questions, especially for cross-bench Members.

This is most unsatisfactory because in the majority of cases only very general questions are being asked and there is no opportunity for the Committee to systematically review all the output groups.

I feel new arrangements are needed to improve accountability and provide more detailed information to the Committee on how well government policies, services and programs are being delivered.

At present, arrangements permit only a cursory examination of the budget estimates of the Health and Environment portfolios.



Stephen Andrew

9 August 2022