



ECONOMICS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mr LP Power MP (Chair)
Mr RA Stevens MP
Mr ST O'Connor MP
Mr TR Watts MP
Ms KE Richards MP
Mr LR McCallum MP

Members in attendance:

Mrs Deb Frecklington MP
Mr TL Mander MP
Mr N Dametto MP

Staff present:

Ms L Manderson (Committee Secretary)
Ms R Duncan (Acting Assistant Committee Secretary)

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT'S COVID-19 FISCAL AND ECONOMIC REVIEW

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

FRIDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2020

Brisbane

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The committee met at 8.00 am.

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare open this hearing for the Economics and Governance Committee. On 8 September, the House referred to the Economics and Governance Committee an inquiry into the Queensland government's COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and pay my respects to elders past and present.

My name is Linus Power, the member for Logan and chair of the committee. With me is Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach and deputy chair. The other committee members are: Lance McCallum, the member for Bundamba; Sam O'Connor, the member for Bonney; Kim Richards, the member for Redlands; and Trevor Watts, the member for Toowoomba North. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to attend and ask questions at its hearing today, so other members may be present during the course of the proceedings. Joining us at present are: Deb Frecklington, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Nanango; Tim Mander, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, shadow Treasurer and member for Everton; and Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook.

The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcasting proceedings and guidelines for camera operators are available from the secretariat. Before we proceed, I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent.

Today's proceedings will be conducted in two sessions, in accordance with the motion agreed to by the Economics and Governance Committee. In examining the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review and discharging its responsibilities with respect to the inquiry terms of reference, the committee will first question the Premier and Minister for Trade for an hour, from 8 am to 9 am, before questioning the Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning for a two-hour period, from 9.15 am to 11.15 am.

PALASZCZUK, Hon. Annastacia, Premier and Minister for Trade, Parliament of Queensland

CHAIR: Good morning, Premier. Before we proceed, I would like to remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is 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 apply for 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, argument or opinion. I intend to guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from both government and non-government members. Premier, if you wish, you may now make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Good morning, Chair and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. From the start of this unprecedented year, my government has been focused on both the health and economic response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the economic front, we acted as early as 6 February with a \$1 million export grants program to help Queensland exporters deal with the emerging new global challenges. Later that month we announced our first package of \$27 million to help business owners such as tourism, fishing and hospitality operators.

In March, my government announced that small and medium Queensland businesses impacted by the coronavirus outbreak would be able to defer their payroll tax payment for six months. That was followed by a \$500 million loan facility, interest free for the first 12 months, to support businesses to keep Queenslanders in work, plus extending the coronavirus payroll tax deferral to all businesses across the state.

On 24 March we unveiled a major package: an additional \$4 billion in measures to support Queenslanders' health, jobs and businesses. That included: a \$300 million household relief package to give Queensland households \$200 off their utility bills; and a package of up to \$500 million to assist Brisbane

workers who lose their job or income and to help them find jobs. There were further measures on payroll tax. For small and medium businesses and large businesses specifically impacted by COVID-19, there was a refund of two months worth of payroll tax. Plus, for small and medium businesses there was a three-month payroll tax holiday. That major package was then followed by \$24.7 million in a range of measures to provide support for vulnerable Queenslanders, particularly those who are homeless, in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

In May, my government doubled the loan facility for COVID-19 affected businesses, with another \$500 million in funding. That was followed by the first stage of our Unite and Recover for Queensland Jobs strategy. That included: a solid determination to maintain infrastructure investment at more than \$50 billion over the next four years; a \$400 million Accelerated Works Program; a further \$200 million in the Works for Queensland program; an \$11.25 million expansion of the Household Resilience Program; \$50 million for tourism infrastructure and more funding towards a domestic tourism campaign; a \$10 million support package for international students; and \$100 million to support small businesses, including small business adaption grants of up to \$10,000.

In June, we announced the second phase of our economic recovery plan. That included: an additional \$5,000 grant for people building a new home in a regional location; a further \$100 million Housing Construction Works for Tradies program; an additional \$50 million for the Unite and Recover Community Stimulus Package; and a Seniors Accessibility and Renovation Assistance boost, with subsidies of up to \$5,000.

In July, we announced a \$90 million package to create even more jobs as part of Queensland's economic recovery plan. That included: extending our Back to Work program with a \$70 million boost; a \$10 million extension to Skilling Queenslanders for Work; and \$10 million to deliver priority environmental projects and jobs in the Great Barrier Reef catchments. Then came a \$200 million Building Acceleration Fund to work in partnership with councils, property developers and industry to accelerate projects that unlock development, increase construction activity and support long-term jobs.

In August, we announced \$50 million in projects across South-East Queensland as part of the state's economic recovery plan to create jobs and build important shovel-ready community infrastructure. In releasing the next phase of our recovery plan, we announced nearly \$200 million in initiatives to underpin the joint focus on protecting health and economic growth which I mentioned this morning at the outset. That meant we had committed more than \$7 billion to support our health response, support industry and business and provide households with cost-of-living relief.

Since then, with the release this month of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, our commitment has grown to \$11 billion, with another \$500 million for the Renewable Energy Fund for publicly owned generation, a \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund and \$249 million in tax relief. Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today and I look forward to answering your questions.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Premier. These are unprecedented times that have affected so many Queenslanders. I really appreciate the fact that you and the Treasurer have made yourselves available to the Economic and Governance Committee. With that, I will turn to questions. As usual, I turn to my erstwhile deputy chair, the member for Mermaid Beach. Deputy Chair, do you have any questions?

Mr STEVENS: Thank you, Chair. I will defer my question to the Leader of the Opposition.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, do you have any questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do. Good morning, Premier and committee members. Thank you for allowing us to be here today. Yesterday the Chief Health Officer said that exemptions for the rich and famous have been granted as 'entertainment and film bring a lot of money into this state'. Why is there one rule for the rich and another rule for everyday Queenslanders when it comes to exemptions?

CHAIR: Obviously the question contained imputations. I say at the outset that we want to deal with the facts carefully so we do not imply motives. I will allow the question. I ask that we resist this in our questioning and that we edit the questions ahead of us to make sure they do not breach the standing orders in that way. Premier, would you now like to address the question?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you very much. Can I say to the committee that we are dealing with unprecedented conditions at the moment. Never in my lifetime did I think we would have to be dealing with a pandemic. As Premier, I rely on the advice of the Chief Health Officer. To date, her advice has stood Queensland in really good stead. Compared to what is happening in Victoria, the advice that she has given to my government has been very much valued and has got Queensland to the situation where we are today.

Yesterday we had zero new cases. I am waiting on confirmation, but my understanding is that today there may be only two new cases but they are in quarantine. That would be good news for Queensland. We have had to completely adapt and change the way in which we operate—that is, having COVID-safe business plans and making sure that we socially distance.

The other day my department and my office had a meeting with some people from South Korea. I was asking how they were going in South Korea, because South Korea has been hailed as having one of the world-class responses to COVID. They said to me that their understanding was that they were now having 100 cases a day. Around the world we have seen so many cases. It is taking peoples' lives. I think the World Health Organization was today talking about 900,000 people having lost their lives due to coronavirus.

These are very difficult times. I can update the committee with some information about the specialist Healthcare Support Service. That was launched on Friday, 4 September. There are currently 40 people who work specifically on border exemption applications. There are eight staff made up of nurses, doctors, social workers, paramedics and mental health clinicians who work specifically on this support service. Queensland's special COVID-19 Healthcare Support Service is there for people from, my understanding is, 7 am to 7 pm. So far that service has fielded over 400 calls.

In relation to exemptions, people do not think these exemptions are being granted. In fact, 31,000 freight exemptions have been granted. I understand 170,000 border zone exemptions have been granted. They are the people moving between the border communities. I also understand that there have been 229 exemptions for specialist workers and healthcare and compassionate grounds. I am informed that Queensland is leading the way when it comes to the way in which we have been dealing with boarding schools.

These are very difficult and extraordinary times. We just want to give the greatest attention we possibly can to families who are apart during this time. There are families that are stranded overseas and cannot come home. There are—

Mr STEVENS: Point of order, Mr Chair. We have limited time for questions today, as you are aware. We are up to four minutes for the answer to this particular question. If the Premier could wind up her fulsome answer to this particular question we could move on to another question.

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, I do not see that as a point of order. The question is whether the Premier is being relevant to the question.

Mr STEVENS: On 118, in terms of the relevance to this particular question, we have moved on.

CHAIR: With respect, Deputy Chair, I was carefully monitoring the answer. At this point the Premier was comparing international borders and the difficult and inevitable heartache that sometimes they create with the situation at our borders and the difficult situations we are all compassionate about. I think it was very relevant to the question asked. That being said, Premier, we do note the opposition's desire to have a number of questions. I ask you to take that into account. It is certainly not part of the standing orders. The answer the Premier was giving was strictly relevant to the question. I was carefully monitoring it. Premier, you were talking about the international borders.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am advised that our Agent-General in London is getting a lot of requests from families who are wishing to return home and may be stranded in London. At a national level we want to work together as cooperatively as possible to ensure that families can be reunited, but we are in global pandemic. We have seen that there is no international tourism. My responsibility is to five million Queenslanders to keep them safe. The advice of our Chief Health Officer, Dr Jeannette Young, has been extraordinary in keeping Queenslanders safe.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I refer the Premier again to the Chief Health Officer's statement yesterday in relation to exemptions—that entertainment and film bring a lot of money into this state. I ask the Premier: what is the price that is put on exemptions, what is the economic criteria for an exemption and how rich do you have to be to get one?

CHAIR: It is really disappointing, member for Nanango, that immediately after I asked for questions to comply with the standing orders you breached the standing orders again.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: With the greatest respect, Mr Chair—

CHAIR: No. Member for Nanango, it is not with the greatest respect that you interrupt the chair. I am not going to allow you to restate that question in the way you desire. I do counsel you on complying with the standing orders as we are all expected to do.

Mr STEVENS: Chair, I raise a point of order. Without taking away more time that the Queensland public have to hear from the Premier on this particular matter—

CHAIR: Let us just put the question to the Premier.

Mr STEVENS:—the point that the member is raising is relevant. It is about putting a price on an exemption which is very much about the economic outcomes that we are looking into.

CHAIR: This is now making an argument. We will move on. There is no point of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will put my question.

CHAIR: No. Member for Nanango, I have already ruled that I am not going to give you the opportunity to restate a question which you know is outside the standing orders. Premier, could you address the question and ignore the parts that are outside the standing orders?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I think we need to put it in context in terms of exemptions. My understanding is that industries have to put forward their plans in relation to making sure that things are COVID safe. That still means that people have to quarantine. We have COVID-safe plans in place for the resources sector and for the agricultural sector. There was a specialist exemption given the other day for boarding schools to allow travel between communities. There are, of course, exemptions for the film industry.

I need to confirm—yes, I can confirm it now; I just wanted to double-check. My understanding is that, in allowing that film to happen, our department had to write to the federal government through Border Force to get that approval. My understanding is that there were federal approvals as well for the film to continue. It brings in a lot of money to the Gold Coast. My understanding is that there are some 900 people, for example, working on the *Elvis* film. Some 900 crew members will be involved. The figure I quoted in parliament yesterday, from recollection, was that there will be about \$100 million in economic benefit to the Gold Coast. The member for Mermaid Beach is from the Gold Coast and knows how important this is.

In other parts of the world there is no industry happening at the moment. My understanding is that in South America some of the mining industry has been shut down. What we are seeing very clearly with Western Australia and Queensland is that our resources sector has been able to do extremely well. If Queensland or Western Australia were to shut down and go into lockdown, that would absolutely be diabolical. The economic impact that would have on our economy—the downturn in our economy—would be phenomenal.

Let me go back to the original point. We have to have these industry plans. They are industry-safe plans. They involve quarantine and they are put in place by the Chief Health Officer.

CHAIR: I just want to make it clear that if anyone wanted to put a question implying that the federal government was letting in the rich because they were rich that would also be out of order. I turn now to the member for Nanango if she has any further questions.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, I do.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I do counsel you.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Thank you, Mr Chair. My next question is to the Premier. Has the Premier or her office pressured the Chief Health Officer not to grant exemptions prior to the election on 31 October, given that the government has been open about turning the borders into an election issue?

Ms RICHARDS: That is outrageous.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I reject that question, I am sorry.

CHAIR: The first part of the question was a legitimate and reasonable question about the actions of government. The second part implies something for which there is no evidence and is purely political. Can we just put the question in a way that is within the standing orders? Premier, I do not know what to do here. This is three for three—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Mr Chair, if I may—

CHAIR: No. I will not allow you to renegotiate and restate the question. This is now three for three where there is a clear breach and it is clearly a strategy—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: They are not clear breaches, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: You are implying a motive. You were firstly asking a hypothetical about what had happened and—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is not a hypothetical.

CHAIR:—then, secondly, implying a motive about that if it had hypothetically happened. It breaches two standing orders. Premier, I ask you to address the general question.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am happy to talk about this, Mr Chair. Let me say very clearly: the whole issue about borders has been addressed by the Federal Court. It has been addressed by the Federal Court. In fact, there is a Federal Court case here. Let us talk about that Federal Court case, because I think it is important that we put it on the public record. We had a situation where Clive Palmer was taking action against the Western Australian government about their border declarations. The Commonwealth participated in that Federal Court case. The Prime Minister, through his representatives, participated. All of the evidence was put by the Commonwealth to support Clive Palmer—

Ms RICHARDS: Shame.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—who wanted to open up the borders in Western Australia.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How about we get back to Queensland, Premier?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Queensland—yes, I am happy to talk about Queensland.

CHAIR: I do not want to have interjections. Let us just deal with this—

Mr MANDER: The member for Redlands just did.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes, exactly. The member for Redlands just interjected.

CHAIR: As I was reminded—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: It is good for one but not for another, just like the rich and the poor.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Paragraph 8 states—

The Commonwealth supported the Palmer parties' case, and Queensland supported Western Australia's case.

The outcome of that case was that the border restrictions are effective. It stated—

- The border restrictions have been effective to a very substantial extent to reduce the probability of COVID-19 being imported into Western Australia from interstate.

It says that very clearly. This is exactly the same situation as in Queensland. You only have to look at what the second wave is doing to Victoria and the Victorian economy and contrast that with what is happening here in Queensland. Our border measures are keeping five million Queenslanders safe. That is my job. My job is to keep five million Queenslanders as safe as possible. That is what I do every single day. I wake up, I listen to the advice and then we make sure that we are communicating to the public what we need to do.

It is a very tough situation in Victoria. There is basically no tourism at the moment. There are hardly any businesses operating. There have been over 700 tragic deaths in aged care. We have had tragic deaths here—six. My understanding is that there were five from cruise ships—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. I ask the Premier to come back to Queensland at the very least.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I am, because the Federal Court case—

CHAIR: Premier, there is a point of order.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Western Australia and Queensland were involved.

CHAIR: Sorry, Premier. Yesterday the Deputy Speaker rightly pointed out to me when he was in the chair that there are consequences to interjections in the chamber. The standing orders are exactly the same for committees. I saw the consequences of interjecting yesterday in the chamber in relation to reflections on the chair. The rules are exactly the same here. Do not reflect on the chair in that manner. Premier, please continue your answer. My apologies for interrupting.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Thank you. Let me quote—

- If persons enter the Western Australian community while infectious, there would be a high probability that the virus would be transmitted into the Western Australian population; and at least a moderate probability that there would be uncontrolled outbreaks.
- If there were uncontrolled outbreaks in Western Australia, the consequences would include the risk of death and hospitalisation (particularly for vulnerable groups, such as elderly and Indigenous people). In the worst-case scenario, the health consequences could be catastrophic.

In relation to the court case, the court found that the border measures help prevent the virus coming into a state and having uncontrolled community transmission. Also, my understanding is that whilst this case was afoot we had the situation—and I cannot say too much because there will be an

investigation into this—of some women from Queensland going to Melbourne and bringing the virus back to Queensland. What we saw very clearly from that is that there were some outbreaks in Queensland because the virus came into Queensland.

I trust the advice of Dr Jeannette Young. Every single day she is briefing either me or the Deputy Premier about the implications of what is happening. I want to pay tribute to all of our health staff for doing an incredible job in terms of managing this pandemic for Queensland so well. We have first-rate staff.

Leader of the Opposition, unfortunately, you and your team wanted the borders to open—64 times you called for the borders to open.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: And the Premier opened the border.

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, no. You wanted the borders open.

CHAIR: Premier, please use correct titles.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The member for Nanango wanted the borders open.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: And the Premier opened them.

Ms PALASZCZUK: We could now be in a situation like Victoria if that had happened.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Seriously, Premier, you do not even believe that yourself.

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is clearly the risk—

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, please!

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I am being verballed.

Ms PALASZCZUK:—that Queenslanders face under the LNP and the member for Nanango. Let me add this: Queensland Treasury has modelled the impact of a Melbourne style lockdown. It would place an additional 330,000 people at risk of losing their jobs or becoming reliant on JobKeeper. The impact compared with our current conditions—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: How about you start comparing apples with apples, Premier?

CHAIR: Member for Nanango!

Ms PALASZCZUK:—would be \$3.1 billion a month in lost economic activity in Queensland.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: We are talking about exemptions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say that again as this is very important: \$3.1 billion a month.

Ms RICHARDS: I raise a point of order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Consistency, compassion, common sense.

CHAIR: I apologise, Premier. There is a point of order by the member for Redlands.

Ms RICHARDS: I raise a point of order. These interjections are frivolous and they need to stop.

CHAIR: I will not make a ruling—

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order, Chair. Since when did a member start running this committee? I thought you were running it.

CHAIR: With all due respect, Deputy Chair, I allow you to make points of order as well. That is within the standing orders. I will continue to allow you to make points of order. I will not make a ruling on whether they are frivolous, but they are persistent.

In the face of this health crisis and the fact that we are trying to soberly deal with the greatest challenges in front of us, I think the number of interjections that are coming from the opposition leader are unbecoming. I do counsel her that it is not at all within the standing orders—and certainly not to be persistent in the way that she is. I remind her that she is a guest of the committee. She sought invitation to participate under the standing orders.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Is that a threat, Mr Chair? You are threatening to kick me out?

CHAIR: All members are required to follow the standing orders during all proceedings of the parliament. I do remind her that, just like any other member, we are required to follow the standing orders of the parliament and the processes. That is what makes for good parliament. Sorry, Premier, we interrupted you with our points of order. Do you wish to conclude your answer?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Mr Chair, I just want to re-emphasise: the measures we have in place are keeping families safe. A lot of people have loved ones in aged-care facilities. They have seen what has happened in Victoria. They have seen what has happened around the world. Around the world

we have economies that are shut down. We have high numbers of deaths. We have high numbers of cases. Queensland and the states that have border measures in place have been able to see their economies open up.

Let me make this very clear: you cannot have a strong economy unless you have the right health response. We are dealing with twin crises. It is very, very complex. It is about getting that balance right. We will do everything we can to address cases as they come up, but at the moment it is absolutely critical that we continue to listen to the Chief Health Officer's advice.

CHAIR: I note that the member for Redlands has a question.

Ms RICHARDS: Can I put on the record my thanks to the Premier and Chief Health Officer for all the work they have done in keeping—

CHAIR: Just a question, member for Redlands.

Ms RICHARDS: Premier, I refer to page 4 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, which details the importance of supporting businesses under the economic recovery plan. Premier, how many jobs are supported by the support measures for businesses, and can you expand on this further?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Let me say from the outset that when we saw all of Australia go into a semi-lockdown a lot of people lost their jobs, and that was absolutely heartbreaking. When I travelled across the state—when we were able to—I met with people who were really struggling. Our international borders are closed. Of course, we have a lot of tourism operators in our state and a lot of businesses had to close. They had to do things differently to survive, and their No. 1 concern was their staff. For everyone I met it was about their staff.

One of the measures we took—which I hope will continue for many years to come—is that we got together with a lot of the peak organisations across Queensland. We sat down with them and worked out what would be the best economic response we could make. One of those responses, which worked extremely well, was the \$200 million worth of small business grants. That is \$10,000 to a small business to really help them get through this. I know that with tourism we have added even more support because, essentially, if you geared your business up to deal with international travel, you have to completely change the outlook and the way in which you do business. The tourists who were coming are no longer coming. That is why we started up the Good to Go campaign. We thought that if Queenslanders could support Queensland then that would stand us in good stead.

For example, my understanding is that around \$10 billion a year was spent by Queenslanders travelling overseas. We really need Queenslanders to back Queensland. I had the mayor for South Burnett in the other day. He was saying how accommodation is packed out in his region. I have had reports about tourist accommodation being packed out in Stanthorpe, and we have also received reports from Hervey Bay. For example, I remember when I had to travel there we had to try three or four motels before we found accommodation. Queenslanders are getting out and supporting Queensland, including out west. I had people come up to me on the street in Barcaldine who said, 'We're doing what you said: come out and support Queensland tourism.'

It is going to be a tough road ahead, and that is why the government has put in very clear measures to make sure that businesses can get support during this time. The measures that the federal government and the state government put in, which complement each other, are about putting people first. We have had support for SMEs, the tourism operators. We have had so many lovely letters coming in, but I have also met people on the ground who tell me how important those grants are. They are keeping their businesses going. We also had the \$500 electricity rebate for SMEs, the \$400 million in land tax relief, and of course the Treasurer has also announced the \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, which will be managed by QIC. The CCIQ also welcomed that announcement, saying—

The extension of the payroll tax waiver, land tax rebate and rent relief will provide some additional immediate relief which is needed by business as they continue through the COVID-19 recovery.

Especially welcomed is the new investment fund which will give Queensland's small and medium businesses opportunities to scale-up, diversify and grow as it is business who holds the key to Queensland's economic recovery.

Mr McCALLUM: I refer to page 3 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, which mentions the Queensland government's economic recovery plan. How many jobs are supported by this plan?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Our economic recovery plan is the result of the cabinet working collectively with all of those stakeholders to come up with a plan about protecting our health, creating jobs and working together. That plan is directly supporting 55,000 jobs over the next year, and there is more

to come as we roll out even more initiatives. That is in addition to the 334,000 jobs being supported through our loans, grants and tax relief for business. We are also supporting jobs in the construction industry, and there are a couple of programs I want to talk about there.

The first one is the \$15,000 First Home Owners Grant for new builds, the seniors and accessibility grants, and the \$5,000 regional boost for new builds, which Master Builders said was a great package for our industry. I can remember being out at Springfield near your electorate of Bundamba, and that \$15,000 First Home Owners Grant for new builds was seeing a lot of construction building in the state. It was the same down your way as well, member for Logan, at Yarrabilba, which I have seen. We are seeing construction continue in this state. In fact, it is going extremely well.

With regard to the \$5,000 boost for regional areas, when I was speaking with people at Springfield they said the demand in Townsville was particularly high and they were sending staff up to Townsville.

I do want to mention the seniors and accessibility grants. This means a lot to people who are living in their own home and who may need some small modifications around their home. This grants program has been well supported. In fact, we have been inundated with applications. Minister de Brenni is always in my ear about whether we can extend that program. It is such a positive program that allows our elderly to stay in their homes for that little bit longer and maybe make that choice of getting modifications done, which means they do not have to go into aged care anytime soon.

Our \$200 million COVID Works for Queensland program and our \$50 million SEQ community stimulus program are great programs. The community stimulus program is about supporting more than 6,000 jobs. I think everyone would know about it in their local area. We give the money to the councils and they have a work plan. It gets people into work as quickly as possible and stimulates the economy. I believe it is one of our most successful programs which has been rolled out through government.

CHAIR: Premier, I am referring to page 5 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review under 'Economic Strategies', the initiatives being delivered under the economic recovery plan. How does that economic support during this difficult time compare with that of other states and territories?

Ms PALASZCZUK: That is a very good question, because I am advised that our economic recovery plan is investing more per person than New South Wales. It has been recognised by the Australian Bureau of Statistic's national accounts that Queensland's economic recovery expenditure has been the most significant in the nation in cushioning the impacts of recession. The ABS said that falls in household spending were—

Partly offset by a:

- 4.6% rise in government consumption expenditure driven by increased state and local spending in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

This is what I think is a very interesting statistic for the committee. The data shows that the recession was less severe—Queensland, minus 5.9 per cent; South Australia, minus 5.8 per cent; and Western Australian, minus 6 per cent—where borders were closed to other states with community transmission. It has been confirmed by data from all over the world that economies are faring better where the virus is more contained. As Deloitte said last week—

The underlying equation is simple. The greater the success against the virus, the greater the success in protecting economies against this pandemic.

Queenslanders are the engine of our economy, and we cannot drive economic growth if we have a deadly virus spreading through our population. Let me make it very clear: I understand that a lot of decisions are made that have impacts on families. Some of these cases are heartbreaking—absolutely heartbreaking. We also have to recognise that the measures we have in place are working. The measures we put in place in terms of our borders are keeping Queenslanders safe.

That is absolutely fundamental to our economic recovery. We cannot have a strong economy unless our health response is right. Let me just take the committee to Victoria. We saw what happened in Victoria. A second wave rippled through the economy and it shut down. New South Wales still have some community transmission, and we hope they get that under control. I have always said that what we should be focusing on nationally is getting Victoria and New South Wales under control, and then all of Australia can open up at the same time. That should be the focus.

CHAIR: I think everyone on the committee is hoping and praying that Victoria and New South Wales get it under control. Member for Redlands, do you have a question?

Ms RICHARDS: Premier, I refer to page 3 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review and the importance of safeguarding the health of Queenslanders for the economic recovery. Can you provide the committee with an update on the funding committed as part of the health response?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Of course we recognise that safeguarding the health of Queenslanders is absolutely important. During our time in office we have been rebuilding the health system in our state. We have been expanding our hospitals. We have been putting on more nurses, more doctors and more allied health professionals. We have been making sure that we have a responsive health system in Queensland.

On 24 March we committed \$1.2 billion to provide a world-leading response to the COVID pandemic, including expansions of our fever clinics, our emergency department capacity, acute care services and regional aeromedical services for remote communities. A lot of work has gone in behind the scenes that the Queensland population does not see. There is all the preparation work, making sure that our hospitals are ready, that our disaster management system is working, and making sure that we have everything we need as quickly as possible. We were fast to act on border restrictions to stop the spread of the virus in Queensland, placing restrictions from 26 March. We have also invested in support for a vaccine, with \$10 million committed towards the University of Queensland's world-leading vaccine. On 14 June we committed \$250 million for additional elective surgeries to catch up on waitlists after non-urgent procedures were put on hold across the nation. We also recently announced an expansion of the Redland Hospital in your area.

Ms RICHARDS: Very exciting, Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Redlands is a growing community, so the hospital is absolutely needed and something that we are very proud to support. On 25 June we announced the creation of a clinical stock reserve to ensure our frontline services have the PPE needed to keep them safe, including our doctors, nurses, paramedics, police officers and corrections staff.

As part of our economic recovery plan we are also focused on making things in Queensland and supporting local businesses. We are trying to scale up capacity in Queensland to make PPE. We have seen hand sanitiser being made by distilleries around Queensland, which has been remarkable. We have seen that surgical masks and face shields are now starting to be made in Queensland. We have committed another \$50 million to ensure we are manufacturing critical PPE and supplies locally.

It was actually very interesting when the Deputy Premier and I went out to the warehouse that is stocking a lot of those supplies. That was not even the distribution centre; that was just a warehouse of supplies. It gave me great confidence, and we showed that to Queensland so Queenslanders can have great confidence that we have adequate stockpiles if we are ever in a Victorian situation.

CHAIR: I might now turn to some other questions. The member for Nanango has indicated she has a question.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Given the Premier has heralded Labor's COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review as her economic plan for Queensland's recovery all week, why is the Premier forecasting to lose another 72,000 jobs before the end of the current financial year, given that we already have a record unemployment queue and the worst unemployment rate in the nation?

CHAIR: I do note that the Treasurer dealt with this in the House, but the Premier may wish to add to it.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I thank the member for Nanango for her question. Let me put it very clearly on the public record. Over 250,000 jobs were created prior to the COVID-19 pandemic and the unemployment rate fell from 6.6 per cent to 5.7 per cent in March. Unemployment is now at 8.8 per cent as at July. The chart at page 13 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review shows employment rising over the coming year. Employment is projected to rise by 82,000 over the next year as the economy recovers. That is an estimate that I want to see us exceed through our economic recovery plan.

The lifting of stage 3 restrictions is estimated by Queensland Treasury to support \$520 million per month to Queensland's economy and 50,000 jobs. We have seen these jobs come back in the ABS data, with 66,900 jobs coming back over June and July. However, there remains 138,000 fewer jobs than before the pandemic.

What places employment at risk is an outbreak in the virus. That is why we have to listen to the expert health advice. As I said previously, if we saw the Victorian style lockdown happen here, that would place an additional 330,000 people at risk of losing their jobs or becoming reliant on JobKeeper. I also mention that, whilst we have a strong economic recovery plan for Queensland, we do not yet know or have seen a plan from the LNP, from the member for Nanango, nor have we seen how they are going to fund \$23 billion worth of their commitments.

Mr STEVENS: Point of order, Mr Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Who would believe Labor's figures?

Ms PALASZCZUK: These are the commitments you have made—

CHAIR: There is a point of order, Premier.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Premier has just said we do not have a plan and then put a figure on it.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, the deputy chair has a point of order. I am trying to address the point of order. I counsel you to not interrupt the deputy chair on his point of order.

Mr STEVENS: My point of order is under standing order 118 on relevance in relation to the Premier's answer to the question, which had nothing to do with the LNP's policies.

Ms PALASZCZUK: It is very relevant because this is our strong plan and you have no plan.

Mr MANDER: It is a \$23 billion—

Ms PALASZCZUK: I have added up what you have said.

Mr MANDER: Well, that is a plan.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Are you going to sell Queensland's assets? Are you going to sell the energy assets? That is your record.

CHAIR: Committee, I just bring you to order.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: The Premier was a minister and selling the assets.

CHAIR: Member for Nanango, I just brought the committee to order and then you continued to interrupt. I notice that the other guest of the committee, the member for Hinchinbrook, has been very patient and has not been acting in the same way as you have been acting and not breaching the standing orders. I now turn to the member for Hinchinbrook to see if he has a question to put to the Premier.

Mr DAMETTO: Will the Premier order fast and effective action to allow water allocations to ensure a \$180 million contribution to the HIPCo irrigation project will be built whilst providing a greater water storage and asset for the future, ensuring that this money is not lost to Queensland?

CHAIR: Premier, that is a reasonably technical question. Do you wish to get some further information and get back to the committee, or is it something you can deal with now?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I might just talk a bit about irrigation prices and then I can get some more specifics to the particular question. In relation to irrigation prices, I am advised we are investing \$14.7 million this financial year to keep water prices low for irrigators. This means that irrigators on average will be \$400 a year better off than the last financial year.

I might just put on the record what Minister Lynham has committed to. He has committed to absorbing the price increases in 2020-21 recommended by the Queensland Competition Authority. He said that we would pass on any price decreases recommended by the Queensland Competition Authority and he would subsidise \$42 million worth of dam safety upgrades across the state over the next four years. I am happy to get some more details for you, member for Hinchinbrook.

CHAIR: Member for Hinchinbrook, the Premier is going to get back to you with some additional information at the end of the session or when it is available.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Yes.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: With reference to the government's \$1.3 billion in infrastructure reduction in the last financial year, can the Premier explain why the \$20 million upgrade to the oncology unit at the Queensland Children's Hospital that was announced last year and was supposed to be completed late this year will not be finalised until the 2021-22 year, according to the recent 2020 capital program update released by the Treasurer?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do not have the details on the oncology unit with me. I am happy to get some advice from the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health. In relation to infrastructure investment, I can advise the committee that our infrastructure program delivered has increased each and every year under my government. Compared with the 2019 budget, we have increased infrastructure investment by \$1.3 billion over 2019-20 and 2020-21. The COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review details that we will deliver 96 per cent of the capital program set out in the 2019 budget for that year.

The other thing we have committed to is our \$51.8 billion infrastructure program over four years to support 44,000 Queensland jobs. That was one of the first things we did as part of this pandemic to make sure that there is certainty. I think I mentioned the other day that I was at the Smithfield bypass and the workers there were commenting that they are actually in work and they have a job, whereas in other countries around the world work has stopped because of COVID.

In relation to the \$20 million oncology unit, I will try to get some information. If I do not have that before the end of this hearing, I might see if the Treasurer could provide an update.

CHAIR: We have had an undertaking that either the Premier or the Treasurer will get back with that information. Are there any other questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes. Will the Premier now be up-front with Queenslanders—

CHAIR: Hold on. Can we just put the question without making imputations about—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I did not want to say the word 'you' so that is why I said the word 'Premier'.

CHAIR: That was not my issue.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I will put the question. Will the Premier be up-front with Queenslanders and confirm that \$15 million of Queensland taxpayers' funds, approved by her government, was provided to the AFL to secure the grand final?

CHAIR: Member, I just want to counsel you. When I put a question, I do not put 'as the Premier is always up-front with the people of Queensland', and I will not accept it put in the alternative either. Simply put the question and do not make suggestions or inferences.

Mr STEVENS: Point of order—

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: With respect, you do not write my questions.

CHAIR: I wish I did because they would be within the standing orders.

Mr STEVENS: Point of order, Chair. There is no issue in parliamentary language with asking if the Premier will be up-front today and put that forward. It is not any imputation whatsoever under standing order 118.

CHAIR: I am suggesting that the Premier is always up-front with the people of Queensland but that is not what we do with questions.

Ms PALASZCZUK: My understanding is that that information is commercial-in-confidence. With respect to the figure that the member for Nanango said, I do not believe it is that amount. It is commercial-in-confidence. I do not believe it is that amount but I will double-check.

CHAIR: Is there another question?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes. The COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review noted that taxation revenue increased by 2.8 per cent in 2019-20 as part of the government's nine new or increased job-destroying taxes since the last state election, ripping almost \$4 billion—

CHAIR: We are getting to a speech, member for Nanango. Is there a question coming?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON:—out of the Queensland economy. Will the Premier match the LNP's commitment that there will be no new taxes or tax increases in the next term of government so as to provide certainty and encourage jobs into Queensland?

Ms PALASZCZUK: What I will commit is that my government will not increase taxes on Queensland households. I make that very clear. Whilst I am talking about this issue, let me also make it very clear that the last time before the LNP were in office they said that they would not do anything about taxes, and this is what they did, and the member for Nanango was part of that government. The LNP increased taxes, fees and charges by more than \$3 billion including: coal royalties, up \$1.64 billion; insurance duty, including on the family home, up \$990 million; stamp duty, up \$361 million; emergency management levy, up \$187.6 million; penalty units, up \$87.5 million; gaming machine taxes, up \$15.9 million; health services levy, up \$22 million; and taxes on casinos, up \$30.8 million.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Point of order, Mr Chair.

Ms PALASZCZUK: The LNP now have \$23 billion of unfunded promises.

CHAIR: Premier, there is a point of order before the committee.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: I ask the chair to rule on relevance and ask the Premier to come to the question, which is: will the Premier match the LNP's commitment to—

Ms PALASZCZUK: No, I answered the question. What I am actually saying, member for Nanango—

CHAIR: Hold on. I will rule, Premier. It is perfectly in order. The question is perfectly in order.
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Ms PALASZCZUK: Who are you going to sack? What are you going to sell? What are you going to tax? You cannot trust the LNP. You cannot trust them. They say one thing before an election and they—

Mr STEVENS: Point of order, Chair.

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Like your \$3.5 billion worth of taxes.

CHAIR: There is a point of order. I hope this is not on relevance because I have ruled on that.

Mr STEVENS: Relevance under standing order 118 in relation to the Premier's current comments in relation to the question.

CHAIR: With respect, Deputy Chair, this is a similar question that was put in the House. In fact, it is sort of repetitious of the question that was asked in the House. I noted that the Speaker in that case allowed and accepted the answer in exactly the same fashion. I am not going to do different to what I heard the Speaker do in question time because we are under the same standing orders. Premier, have you completed or do you have anything further to add?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I just want to make this point: the LNP have \$23 billion in unfunded commitments. The people of Queensland need to know how they are going to pay for it. How are they going to pay for it? What are they going to cut? Who are they going to sack? What are they going to sell?

Mr STEVENS: Point of order, Chair. It is not a ministerial statement. We are here to question the Premier.

Ms PALASZCZUK: Member for Mermaid Beach, it is absolutely relevant because you cannot trust what the LNP say before an election and what they do after.

Mr STEVENS: This is making a farce, Chair.

CHAIR: With respect, as I said, and I do not wish to have a third point of order on this, this is exactly the same question and answer that was put and answered in the House. Are there any more questions?

Mrs FRECKLINGTON: Yes.

CHAIR: I do note that we have had 34 minutes of opposition questions and 14 minutes from the government. There might be time for one more question from the member for Bundamba.

Mr McCALLUM: Premier, I refer to page 10 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review where it mentions the impact the global pandemic is having on business investment. What is the Queensland government doing to encourage private investment as part of the economic recovery plan?

Ms PALASZCZUK: Before I address that issue, I have an update on the oncology unit that was asked about. I am advised that the construction finishes in 2020 and it will be operational in 2021. I have just had that come through.

In relation to private investment, this is really important because the government is putting in place its strong commitment to over \$50 billion worth of capital infrastructure. We know that there is a great role for the private sector to play as well. This week I have been having a number of conversations with people from other states around the country looking at investing in Queensland, which is great news. Why do they want to invest here? Because we have had a strong health response and they see huge economic opportunity to invest in Queensland. The other issue, of course, is that in my capacity as Minister for Trade I am always looking for opportunities for overseas investors to invest in Queensland. I believe that there are huge opportunities, especially with our renewable energy zones, to see more investment in Queensland.

The government has proposals that come to it from time to time around priority development areas. We will be looking at those plans very closely. That is in the area of the Minister for State Development. There are a lot of exciting plans that the private sector is starting to share with government. I honestly believe that the economic response and the health response are encouraging a lot more private investment into Queensland. We look forward to seeing the results of that in the years ahead.

CHAIR: Premier, have your officers been able to get any information relating to the member for Hinchinbrook's question about the Hughenden irrigation project? Is there any feedback you can give the committee at this time?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I need to get some more information on that. I am happy to take that on notice.

Mr DAMETTO: Just to clarify, the question is about water allocation from the state—making sure that the state fast-tracks water allocation for the project so the \$180 million from the federal government is not lost to Queensland.

Ms PALASZCZUK: I do have some advice on the Hughenden irrigation scheme. My government is committed to undertaking further work. We will come back to the member for Hinchinbrook. We are waiting for the business case. Does that answer your question?

Mr DAMETTO: That has completed it.

CHAIR: Thank you for putting that important project on the agenda. Perhaps the Treasurer will provide an answer to the second part of the question, as indicated. I thank the Premier for her participation here today. It is a very tough time for the entire state. We really appreciate the fact that we have had you here directly. Is there anything you would like to add before we end the session?

Ms PALASZCZUK: I would like to thank the committee. I would also like to thank the people of Queensland. The way in which Queenslanders have responded to the testing, the way in which businesses have adapted, the way in which people have put in place COVID-safe plans—every single thing has helped keep us safe. I am indebted to Queenslanders for the work they are doing.

CHAIR: On behalf of the people of Logan, I cannot echo that enough. When those two Victorian cases came into Logan there was an extraordinary, fantastic response from the people of Logan.

Proceedings suspended from 9.03 am to 9.17 am.

CHAIR: We now resume the committee's proceedings for the hearing of the inquiry into the Queensland government's COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review. The committee will question the Treasurer and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning. This session will continue until 11.15 am.

My name is Linus Power, the member for Logan and chair of the committee. Ray Stevens, the member for Mermaid Beach, is the deputy chair. Other committee members are: Lance McCallum, the member for Bundamba; Sam O'Connor, the member for Bonney; Don Brown, the member for Capalaba, who is participating as a substitute member for the member for Redlands in this session of the hearing; and Trevor Watts MP, the member for Toowoomba North. Joining us with leave of the committee are Tim Mander, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, shadow Treasurer and member for Everton; and Nick Dametto, the member for Hinchinbrook. Other members may present at some point in the future. I note that the timing of questions in the last session was 36 minutes for opposition members and 17 minutes for government members. I have noted that some government members did wish to ask questions, so I will try to accommodate them.

DICK, Hon. Cameron, Treasurer, Minister for Infrastructure and Planning, Parliament of Queensland

CHAIR: Good morning, Treasurer. Before you proceed, I take the opportunity to remind those present that today's hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. I also refer specifically to standing orders 112 and 115 governing rules for questioning. I did make an issue of this in the last session. I do think we have a responsibility to follow the standing orders. I intend to guide the proceedings so that relevant issues can be fully explored and to ensure government and non-government members have adequate opportunity to ask questions. Treasurer, if you wish, you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair and members of committee. As promised back in May, today I am pleased to follow the Premier in appearing before the committee to discuss the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review. Before doing that, I quickly thank the committee for its ongoing assessment of the government's COVID-19 economic responses that has been undertaken over the past few months. As members would be aware, the COVID-19 pandemic is having a profound impact on human health and the global economy. While all Queenslanders have worked hard to avoid the worst of the pandemic, we all are very mindful of the ongoing risks that the virus poses to human life and of the tremendous economic strain it places on communities, businesses and individuals.

To help manage the crisis and to support the recovery, the Palaszczuk Labor government has already committed over \$7 billion towards COVID-19 support initiatives including measures for impacted businesses, workers, households, communities and the health sector. On Monday I was pleased to release the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review for 2019-20 and 2020-21. It shows that Queensland's economy is fighting back against COVID-19 and is forecast to rebound almost twice as strong as the Australian average in calendar year 2021.

As part of the fiscal and economic review I also unveiled a range of new economic stimulus measures, savings and debt initiatives that support business investment and jobs, ease the burden on small business and ensure Queensland's balance sheet works as hard as it can. We will enable regional councils to free up cash flow in the order of \$280 million for example, to fund job-supporting capital works through a bold plan that will allow them to refinance their debt at much lower interest rates. Small and medium business will get an additional \$249 million in tax relief. That includes an extension of the payroll tax waiver for July and August this year for companies with a payroll up to \$6½ million. It includes a continuation of the payroll tax waiver for JobKeeper, a payment which the federal government has not exempted from income tax. It includes an extension of rent relief for COVID-19 affected businesses renting Queensland government premises to the end of 2020. To allow property owners to continue providing rent relief to affected tenants, the 25 per cent land tax rebate will be extended to 30 June 2021. Stamp duty will be abolished for eligible small businesses seeking to restructure to facilitate their ongoing growth.

To drive productivity improvements, the Queensland Productivity Commission and Building Queensland will be integrated into Queensland Treasury. The hardworking staff of the LNP's flawed Public Safety Business Agency will be transferred back to the front line, to the Queensland Fire and Emergency Service and the Queensland Police Service. A debt recovery and compliance program will increase proactive debt management as well as audits and investigations of outstanding taxation and royalties. This measure raises \$488 million over three years without raising taxes.

We will invest \$1 billion in two new job-supporting funds. The \$500 million renewable energy investment fund will support renewable energy projects including transmission and storage; and the \$500 million Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund will support small businesses and major projects. To enable those \$500 million funds and to deal with the need for more stimulus measures over coming years, I announced on Monday that we will follow the advice of the Prime Minister and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia and borrow an additional \$4 billion from 2021-22. That is in addition to the borrowings outlined in CFER19.

Chair and committee members, today is the eighth anniversary of the Newman LNP government's first budget—a budget which led to 14,000 Queenslanders losing their jobs and which so stymied infrastructure in this state that the only lasting evidence is the tower the LNP built for itself across the road from where we sit today. That budget eight years ago was driven by austerity with no pandemic. There are those in Queensland who would take that path again—not this government and not me. We will borrow to build and recover because it is the right thing to do.

COVID-19 has taken a heavy toll. Every member of this committee knows that. Tens of thousands of Queenslanders face an uncertain future as the Morrison government winds down and then withdraws JobKeeper payments. Our focus is supporting businesses to create employment opportunities for people entering the labour market. The committee can rest assured that the government is doing and will continue to do all that it can to support jobs growth in the challenging times ahead. I thank the committee and welcome the opportunity to discuss these important matters.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Treasurer. I advise that I have received a letter from the Premier correcting the record with regard to her appearance before the committee. The Premier said that the number of staff working on COVID-19 health support was 40 but that new advice from the Department of Health indicates that 80 staff are in this team. I table that letter.

Mr MANDER: Good morning, Treasurer. I refer to the Queensland government's quarantine charges of \$2,800 for individuals, \$3,710 for couples and \$4,620 for a family of four. Will the Treasurer advise the total amount the Queensland government has invoiced for quarantine payments to date?

Mr DICK: I am happy to provide that information to the committee. This is an arrangement to which all jurisdictions now have agreed to ensure effective recovery of quarantine costs across the nation, so Queensland is not alone there. I am very happy to look at the impact of that on the revenue position of the state, but it is something that all states and territories are engaged in. In fact, I think the Northern Territory was the first jurisdiction to impose those quarantine requirements. I remind committee members that that is another jurisdiction that has very strong quarantine control measures and border control measures, along with Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia—state and territory jurisdictions of all political colours, not just Labor states. I am happy to look at that and come back to the committee before we conclude today if we can determine that figure.

CHAIR: We have an undertaking that the Treasurer will return with some figures on that.

Mr DICK: I will update the committee at the end of the hearing today on where we are with that.

CHAIR: I appreciate it, Treasurer.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, on Monday and again this morning you talked about the \$4 billion package going forward that you will borrow. Will the Treasurer advise the annual financial year breakdown of this commitment funding profile over the next four years?

Mr DICK: No. We have indicated very fairly and openly to Queenslanders and to all members of the committee, including the opposition, that that is the sustainable borrowing framework for the government for the medium term. That will be what we will be borrowing. To reinforce the point and to remind the committee, this is following the call by Prime Minister Scott Morrison, federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and the Governor of the Reserve Bank that all state and territory jurisdictions, in their words—particularly the Prime Minister's—must do more. The figure the Prime Minister has put on it for states and territories is \$40 billion in additional borrowings. We have made a determination that the sustainable level of borrowings in the medium term is \$4 billion. We have announced that. That will ensure that the COVID recovery stimulus strategy of the government will total \$11 billion. That is what we will borrow. Going forward, we will invest and stimulate the economy as we need to. We do not have a breakdown of that. We have not identified that, because we have not done it yet.

There is obviously a range of stimulus measures. We are constantly receiving calls from a range of sectors and stakeholder groups in the Queensland economy that continue to come to government with some ideas and suggestions about how we might stimulate the economy. We have to have a watching brief on that and continue to consider how we might invest that money, but we

have been very clear with what our borrowing pathway is. That is sustainable. It is not the \$23 billion that the opposition has confirmed this week it will invest—without raising taxes and without borrowing more. That is not possible without the state borrowing more. We have said that we will borrow \$4 billion. That leads to only one conclusion. The only way you can fund it—if you are not going to increase borrowing or increase revenue and in fact keep expenditure below revenue; as members of the committee know from CFER, revenue has dropped over \$6 billion over two years—is to cut.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, if I am right, then, you are confirming that the \$4 billion you have announced is not part of the \$102 billion forecast to the end of this financial year?

Mr DICK: I said that in my opening statement.

Mr MANDER: Okay, so it is not \$102 billion then. It is for this financial year. Can you tell us then, please, what the forecasted non-financial public debt will be in the 2023-24 financial year?

Mr DICK: No, it is not possible to determine that until we know what the revenue position of the Commonwealth government will be. That is why, to address the misrepresentations that have been made publicly by the LNP that we do not have a budget, it is a terrible falsehood—a terrible falsehood that is being perpetrated in the community, creating concern and alarm that we do not have a budget. No state has a budget this year and no state will have a budget until after 6 October, when the Australian government hands down its budget—an agreement that all first ministers signed up to in May this year.

I should put it on the public record again that the sequence of budgets across the Commonwealth will be as follows. On 6 October the Australian government will hand down its budget. On 8 October the Western Australian government will hand down its budget. On 10 November the Liberal South Australian government and the Northern Territory government will hand down their budgets. On 12 November the Liberal Tasmanian government will hand down its budget. On 17 November the Liberal government in New South Wales—I think it is a Liberal government in New South Wales; I think the coalition imploded yesterday, the National Party running their own race now—is going to hand down a budget and our government has announced that if we are re-elected we will hand down a budget in the week beginning 30 November, which is the first reasonable opportunity we believe we could, working incredibly hard after the election, hand down a budget. That is the situation and it is not possible to forecast. I just want to make it clear that the reason we cannot forecast is that we do not know what the revenue lines are from the Commonwealth.

CHAIR: From the Commonwealth?

Mr DICK: CFER is based on the revenue forecasts that we received from the Commonwealth some time ago, but that was before the lockdown in Victoria and that is going to substantially impact on GST and receipts to the Commonwealth which has an impact on what we will receive in terms of Commonwealth payments to states, so it is not possible to forecast, member for Everton—it just is not—and no other state can do it until they get the numbers from the Commonwealth, and I would urge members to remind the community of that.

CHAIR: Is that why every state is holding back their budgets until after the—

Mr STEVENS: I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. Is it the non-government members' turn for questions?

CHAIR: Deputy Chair, I was eminently fair in the last session, when two-thirds of the question time went to the—

Mr STEVENS: I thought we were doing it in blocks.

CHAIR: We are making sure that, as I did in the last session, two-thirds of the questions went to the—

Mr STEVENS: But has our block finished?

CHAIR: No, I am simply putting a question.

Mr STEVENS: But I thought we were doing it in blocks. It is our block. It should be the member for Everton.

CHAIR: I do not know that that is in any of the conditions that we agreed to, but two-thirds of the questions went to the opposition in the last session. I have been eminently fair, Deputy Chair—two-thirds—and I will endeavour to ensure that over half of the questions, and therefore overwhelmingly the question time, go to opposition members. Sorry, but I may have lost my train of thought.

Mr DICK: Yes, that is my understanding, Chair, that no other state is in a position to deliver a budget at a state level because they do not have the revenue lines in particular as well as other financial and economic metrics from the Commonwealth government which will be incredibly important in trying to not only settle a budget but also forecast. Forecasting is notoriously difficult, and it has never been more difficult than with COVID-19 in the world.

CHAIR: I appreciate that, and I inform the deputy chair that the time was being recorded as question time from the government to ensure we have fairness.

Mr STEVENS: Thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, did you have a further question?

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, if the projected debt at the moment is \$102 billion at the end of this financial year, if we add the \$4 billion that you just mentioned and if we look at the forecast debt beyond this financial year from MYFER, would it be reasonable to say that the debt at the end of the 2023-24 financial year will be at least \$114 billion?

Mr DICK: No, it is not fair to say that, member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Could you explain why?

Mr DICK: I have explained that in detail already in my statement and in my ministerial—

Mr MANDER: Not very well, Treasurer.

CHAIR: Member for Everton—

Mr DICK: Maybe not to your satisfaction, member for Everton.

CHAIR: Hold on—

Mr MANDER: The people of Queensland would like you to be open and transparent about debt.

CHAIR: Hold on—

Mr Dick interjected.

Mr MANDER: You said—

CHAIR: Treasurer and member for Everton, we have a process of putting the questions and having the answers. We will not debate the question nor repeat the question. The question has been put. We have had long discussions about this but, member for Everton, please do not bait or repeat. It is not in the standing orders to do that so, member for Everton, I seek to see if you have another question.

Mr MANDER: I do, thank you, Mr Chair.

CHAIR: Member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. If we forecast that the debt at the end of 2023-24 will be at least \$114 billion—

CHAIR: When we—

Mr MANDER:—can the Treasurer advise how much a credit rating downgrade would cost Queensland?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, if I could counsel you. A question starting with 'if we can forecast' is, by nature, hypothetical and the standing orders have rules against that. Is there a way you could perhaps—

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, the whole conversation is about forecasts. This is about a forecast. Every figure that the Treasurer gives is a forecast, so I am simply doing the same thing.

CHAIR: With respect, we can question the forecasts that have been made, not anticipate 'if a forecast' was made. That is the distinction there. We need to deal with the forecasts that are contained in the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, not speculate on hypothetical forecasts that do not exist yet—

Mr MANDER: With respect, Mr Chairman, the Treasurer himself has said the extra \$4 billion is outside of the forecast.

CHAIR: I am merely letting you know that the standing orders prevent the question being asked that way. Nonetheless, Treasurer, even though the question is not within standing orders—

Mr DICK: I will be fair. I have been critical of the member for Everton that after a thousand days in the job I said that he had done nothing, but he now has become a better economist than any other economist in the country, being able to forecast—

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

Mr DICK:—into 2023-24.

Mr BROWN: Arrogant!

Mr DICK: Yes, it is arrogant. I will take that interjection. It is an arrogant position to think that he can project what any other state—

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, I raise a point of order.

Mr DICK: I do want to return to the credit rating—

CHAIR: No, hold on, Treasurer; there is a point of order. What is the point of order?

Mr MANDER: I find that comment offensive from whoever it came from down the other end and I ask that it be withdrawn.

Mr BROWN: I withdraw.

CHAIR: So—

Mr DICK: Thank you. There are two matters that the member for Everton raises. One is debt and the other is credit ratings, and I would be pleased to inform the committee of matters relevant to both of those issues. As I have said publicly previously, the cost of debt for Queensland now, at least today, is as good as the AAA rated states. It is as good, effectively, as New South Wales and Victoria. The interest on five-year bonds for Queensland, I think, is 0.53 per cent and for New South Wales and Victoria it is 0.52 per cent, so we are effectively paying 0.01 per cent additional which, for all intents and purposes, means that we are getting debt at the same cost as AAA rated states. In fact, Queensland under the Labor government is paying \$800 million less a year than under the LNP, so that is due to our effective management of the economy.

The second thing I would say—and I know where the member for Everton is going with his question—is about credit ratings, and I want to talk a little about credit ratings because strong borders are delivering for Queensland. Strong borders are delivering for Queensland the same as AAA rated states, and it is not just five-year bonds; it is five-year and 10-year bonds. Queensland's borrowing costs are about the same as New South Wales and Victoria. The ratings agencies have all reaffirmed our credit rating, even amidst COVID-19, as recently as two weeks ago. Moody's affirmed our Aa1 rating on 22 April 2020 and affirmed our stable outlook on 16 July 2020. Standard & Poor's—S&P Global—affirmed our AA-plus rating with a stable outlook on 21 October 2019. Fitch affirmed our AA with a stable outlook on 26 August. In handing down its commentary, Fitch acknowledged Queensland's stable revenue base, our tax competitiveness and our prudent management of debt. They are not my words but Fitch's words. Interest rates, as I said, are at historic lows and the total cost of Queensland's borrowings has fallen from \$2.3 billion under the LNP in 2014 to just \$1.5 billion in 2019-20.

I am advised by Treasury—this is a very important point—that our borrowing costs will remain below 2014 levels, so there is no need to increase taxes to repay this debt. That is another furphy that is being circulated in the community by the LNP. Even with this additional borrowing, our interest rates will be less than when the member for Nanango was the assistant treasurer in Campbell Newman's government. When we can increase borrowings, we should do so. That is what the Prime Minister has asked us to do and I do not know why the state LNP will not listen. They have said they are not going to raise debt. They have said that they are going to stabilise debt, and 14,000 Queenslanders today remember what happened on this day eight years ago in terms of what stabilising debt meant. They have never forgotten it, the 14,000 people who lost their jobs. I do not understand the irrationality of the LNP when the Prime Minister is calling on all states to borrow. We are acting prudently but they refuse to do so, so it is up to them to explain how they are going to fund \$23 billion in election commitments.

Mr MANDER: Where did you get that figure from, Treasurer?

Mr DICK: Out of your mouth.

Mr MANDER: Our plan?

CHAIR: Hold on. I would like to counsel the member for Everton that I was just about to give the call to you and you once again engaged in baiting and interjections when the question had finished.

Mr MANDER: Provocation, Mr Chair.

Mr DICK: I am happy to take another question.

CHAIR: Had you put a question? Do you seriously want it answered, or was it just a comment?

Mr DICK: Was it a question about debt?

Mr MANDER: I am waiting for the invitation to ask another question.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, I do counsel you, but if you have another question.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, why do you think it is acceptable for Labor's so-called economic recovery plan to reject that Queensland's record unemployment queue will continue to grow by another 72,000 Queenslanders over the next nine months?

CHAIR: I call the Treasurer.

Mr DICK: Thank you, Chair. As the member for Everton knows, everything the government is doing and everything that I am doing as Treasurer is focused on getting as many Queenslanders back into work as possible. Before COVID-19 our government had created 250,000 jobs. That was the record of the Palaszczuk Labor government. We had created 250,000 jobs and the majority of those jobs, if I can advise the committee, were in the private sector. There is often talk from the LNP about the bloated public sector. They talk about the bloated public sector, but they do not talk about doctors, nurses, teachers, police officers and others who work on the front line. In fact, for every job the Palaszczuk government created directly, another six jobs were created in the broader Queensland economy.

Before COVID-19 employment had grown for 42 consecutive months under the Labor government and the unemployment rate had fallen to 5.7 per cent, almost a full percentage point lower than under the LNP. The latest ABS labour force survey shows that more than 528,400 Australians had lost their jobs since March, 138,200 of whom were Queenslanders. The unemployment rate was 8.8 per cent in July, boosted by an increased participation rate. Some 54,000 Queenslanders were encouraged to join the labour force to seek work over the past three months. That unemployment rate is based on a survey of less than 0.3 per cent of Queensland households. It was last measured in early July, as Queensland was on the verge of reopening our economy and Victoria was yet to re-enter hard lockdown, so before all of that. Therefore, we look forward to what the updated figures will be.

COVID-19 of course has driven a new set of data, and this is the interesting thing. The ABS knows that there is a lag in the labour force data, so it set up a new data set. It did it intentionally to try and give more real-time measures to the community about what was happening in the labour force and the economy, and that is the jobs and wages survey. That covers—and I think it is worth committee members knowing this—99 per cent of large employers and 86 per cent of small businesses across the country, not 0.3 per cent of Queensland households but 99 per cent of large employers and 86 per cent of small businesses. The survey showed that between mid-April and 22 August the number of jobs in Queensland had increased by 5.8 per cent, higher than the national average of 4.7 per cent. I make it very clear to the committee that not me but the Queensland Treasury forecasts that 82,000 jobs will be added in Queensland by June 2021. There will not be 72,000—or whatever number the LNP says—jobs lost; the Treasury's forecast is that 82,000 jobs will be added by June 2021. That is what the Treasury forecasts to 30 June next year, and I think it is worth all members of the committee reflecting on that and fairly and properly reporting that to their communities.

Mr MANDER: That figure comes from the -3 employment growth rate that is in your figures.

CHAIR: Member for Everton—

Mr MANDER: It just needed some clarification, Deputy Speaker.

CHAIR: I am glad I got promoted.

Mr MANDER: With regard to the 72,000 jobs that will not be there at the end of this financial year, Treasurer, can you advise the committee what industries those jobs are expected to come from and what plan Labor has to save those jobs?

Mr DICK: I know it has been a difficult week for you, having to apologise for misleading the parliament—

Mr MANDER: Not quite as difficult as the government.

Mr DICK: I would counsel you to not mislead when I put evidence from the Treasury before you.

Mr MANDER: These are your own figures, Treasurer: a negative three per cent growth rate.

Mr DICK: I will take it up with the Speaker later.

Mr McCALLUM: Point of order, Chair. I am finding it difficult to hear the Treasurer's answers over the constant interjecting.

CHAIR: I did think this one time there was certainly not necessarily a policy discussion; there was some engagement across the table. I counsel both members. If we have finished the answer we will move on.

Mr DICK: I am happy to confirm that the Treasury's advice is that 82,000 jobs will be added to the Queensland economy by June 2021. That is the focus of the government. The focus of the government is working every single day to get every one of those 133,800 Queenslanders back to work. This pandemic has had a profound impact on not just our economy and the economies of other states and territories but also other jurisdictions around the world. The focus of every government now is to try to stimulate the economy. Strong borders are enabling economic recovery. That is demonstrated in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. The drop in economic activity in Queensland, regrettable as it was, was less than it was in New South Wales and Victoria—about a 5.6 per cent drop in GSP for the June quarter with a drop of around 8½ per cent in New South Wales and Victoria. We want to see that sustained and we want to see that reversed. We want to see economic growth, and that is what we are working towards. Stronger growth means more jobs, and that is what we are working on.

CHAIR: Referring to page 6 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, can you explain and further talk about how the government's unite and recover economic plan will support jobs for Queenslanders?

Mr DICK: Given the nature of the crisis, a global pandemic with a vaccine yet to be developed, given that operating environment that we are in—that all jurisdictions are in—we have to continue to focus on protecting the health of Queenslanders. Protecting Queenslanders' health and economic recovery go hand in hand. That is why continuing Queensland's strong health response is a cornerstone of our economic plan. We cannot stop there, though. While Queensland entered the pandemic, as I have said today, in a strong economic position, the global nature of the crisis has challenged industries and businesses large and small in ways that we have never experienced, certainly not in our lifetimes and, frankly, not in the lifetimes of most Queenslanders, regardless of their age. That is why the initiatives we have announced to date have been about keeping people in jobs and the economy moving.

Our economic plan is backed, as I have said earlier, with \$7 billion in funding, outlining where we see investment should be made to grow jobs and to stimulate the economy. The priorities in that plan set a clear path for economic recovery and support thousands of jobs into the future. We have a priority on small business. We know that small business is one of the great engines of the Queensland economy. It employs more than 40 per cent of all private sector workers. Small businesses have been provided with \$200 million in small business adaption grants. I have met a number of owners of small businesses who have managed to keep going in incredibly trying times for a number of reasons, mainly because of their strength and resilience and their capacity to keep going, which I think are signature characteristics of Queenslanders, but also because of the small business adaption grants. I know that a number of committee members have met with owners of those businesses in their communities around Queensland. We expect the adaption grants to assist up to 20,000 small businesses across the state, supporting traditional and emerging industries in our amazing manufacturing sector in Queensland, supporting those manufacturers particularly in regional communities to power up regional development. Members of the committee will know of our manufacturing hubs grants that sit alongside our manufacturing hubs. Our plan will help Queensland regions grow. There is a strong focus on the regions.

Investing in skills and training, particularly for young people, will be critical for the next three to five years. We are already investing \$90 million to help train jobseekers and get them back to work through Back to Work—one of our signature programs as a government—Skilling Queenslanders for Work and our new Reef Assist program, which the Premier announced in Cairns, to create 200 jobs in the Great Barrier Reef catchments—not only the most amazing, special and important natural asset our state has but also an incredibly important economic asset for our regional communities. Protecting the reef is so important. Then there is the infrastructure guarantee that we have given to Queensland: \$51.8 billion over four years to stimulate the economy by investing in infrastructure. That is going to be very important.

Overall we are supporting businesses through our grants and loan programs, which are in turn helping keep 334,000 people employed, on Treasury estimates. There are additional things we are doing: as I have said, in relation to infrastructure our Accelerated Works Program, our \$200 million Works for Queensland program and the \$100 million housing construction Works for Tradies program. We created jobs and we are in the business of creating jobs again.

Perhaps I could also address with some clarity the matter that the member for Everton raised about jobs. He asked me a question and I should fairly respond. There is a difference between year average terms and year ended terms. The best way I can assist the member for Everton is to refer to page 13 of the fiscal and economic review and chart 3. The member for Everton seems to have fallen into error. His 72,000 figure is based on year average terms from an average number. In the graph on page 13 of CFER in year ended terms from June 2020 to June 2021 the employment line, as honourable members will see, increases. There is an increase there. That is increasing from where we are to where we are going by 82,000. That is 82,000 that will be added to the Queensland economy. I just thought I might clarify that for the member for Everton and other members of the committee.

CHAIR: Recently we were at a site on the border of our electorates where there is a major investment in infrastructure and logistics. How important is it for those making big investments that drive jobs that we have a safe atmosphere? Would they be making the same investments in Victoria?

Mr DICK: I think that is a really good point, Chair. As we all know—every member of the committee knows—having confidence in economic activity, economic growth and the economic plan of any jurisdiction is critical to investment paths. They are intertwined. I have said it before, and it has come from economists across Australia, Deloitte Access Economics in particular. They have said that unless you can control the virus you cannot reopen the economy. We see that in Victoria. You are right, Chair. It is a tragedy what has happened in that state. There has been a lot of debate in the last couple of days about exemptions, but you cannot talk about exemptions if you are locked in your house for six weeks. Exemptions are entirely irrelevant. By giving some confidence to that sort of private sector investment—the biggest industrial estate in Queensland to be developed in Logan in a really important part of the south-east, a terrific logistics hub—investment will continue to come. That is what we are working on. We will stimulate private sector employment to get people back to work.

Mr McCALLUM: Good morning, Treasurer. I refer to page 19 of the CFER statement. Could you please provide the committee with an update on what progress is being made towards realising \$3 billion in savings?

Mr DICK: Thank you, member for Bundamba. That is a very important point. To support our economic recovery we have implemented a savings and debt plan, with a target of \$3 billion over four years, to make sure we have a very strong focus on infrastructure, creating jobs and delivering the frontline services that Queenslanders deserve and need. We will achieve those savings by focusing on core tasks, ensuring government resources are directed to where they are needed the most. That has never been more critical than during the pandemic. Programs that are time limited will either be integrated into core business or ceased. Department staff levels will be maintained within approved caps, excluding frontline staff. Of course, we have to grow the front line as we build more hospitals, health clinics, police stations, fire stations including rural fire stations and so on. There will be no marketing other than public and road safety. Tourism promotion, investment attracting or economic activity recovery plans will continue.

I am pleased to inform the committee today that, to date, since I made that announcement savings of \$319.8 million have been returned to government. Those savings include reductions in contractors and consultants, and agency expenditure on travel, supplies and services. Those savings are in addition to those savings achieved through the public sector wage deferral and those achieved by the now disbanded Service Priority Review Office.

Ongoing work to identify and realise savings is focused on six areas: accommodation, which includes our plan to allow more workers to work from south-east hubs that we have established—remote work centres in Logan, Ipswich, Robina and Maroochydore, and I know the Gold Coast members know about the work centre in Robina; advertising, marketing and communications; agency functional reviews, which have resulted in the changes I mentioned earlier to the Public Safety Business Agency, Queensland Productivity Commission and Building Queensland data; ICT savings; structural reform; and, finally, workforce. We have also set savings targets for other entities.

Our aim is to contribute \$840 million in savings towards a \$3 billion target. We are working well in achieving that, and I want to thank the public sector for responding to this, delivering the services that Queensland needs but saving almost \$320 million for the taxpayer to assist us in our economic recovery in Queensland.

Mr BROWN: Could you please explain how the Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund will support economic recovery in Queensland?

Mr DICK: Thank you, member for Capalaba, and thank you for the interest in your local community. I know that you, and all members here, to be fair—not just members of the government—are visiting and backing in your local businesses, particularly small businesses. I know that there is a very vibrant small business community in Capalaba in the Redlands. Thank you for supporting them. The COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review serves two essential purposes: to provide a reckoning of our current financial position against impacts of the pandemic; and to add momentum to our pathway to recovery.

Part of that process has been our commitment to supporting the business sector and making sure they can navigate their way through the challenges they are facing and to stimulate our economy through direct investment. We have established a Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, which I know you are very interested in, member for Capalaba—up to \$500 million to be dedicated to direct investment in Queensland businesses and industries. As I said on Monday when I released the plan, we are making sure we are backing businesses that are painted maroon so we can support Queensland companies. That will be managed by the Queensland Investment Corporation. It will also support companies that want to grow in Queensland and create jobs.

The fund will support good quality Queensland businesses that need capital to create jobs and invest in strategic assets where it means more jobs for Queenslanders. We will target commercial returns. That is very important. This is borrowings, and we need to ensure we get a return to offset any additional state debt borrowed to invest in the fund. It will also allow the fund to partner with private investors, financiers, superannuation funds and other financial institutions. I think what we can do leveraging with super funds is very important going forward. They are looking to invest. They are looking to get into the market now, and I think we need to partner with and support them. The commitment leverages the commercial expertise of our world-class fund manager, QIC. It is a world-class fund manager, and that is recognised in the financial markets around the world. It will be run by QIC Ltd to invest in businesses leading to more jobs, as I have said. We want to make those investments going forward to ensure we can create jobs. We will make those investments measured against key objectives in the criteria set by the government and I announced them on Monday.

I note that earlier I said state final demand fell by 5.6 per cent in the June quarter. It fell by 5.9 per cent—my apologies. That fall was mitigated by strong growth in government expenditure of 4.6 per cent. The ‘6’ comes from the 4.6 per cent in government investment in the June quarter, which was the strongest in Australia. There is a correlation between the 4.6 per cent increase in government investment and the 5.9 per cent drop, which is painful and regrettable. However, the state that acted the strongest and stimulated the economy the most got the best result, or one of the best results. It was not as low, as I have said, as in New South Wales and Victoria. There is a 4.6 per cent increase in government expenditure and a 5.9 per cent reduction in state final demand. We hope that we can ensure that continues in the opposite direction in the best way we can going through the pandemic, but it will be hard this financial year. It will be difficult.

CHAIR: Treasurer, referring to page 3 of the CFER document, can you refer to how changes to planning laws can support business and industry during COVID?

Mr DICK: Chair, as you know, we have worked very hard to streamline the planning system in Queensland during COVID. It was one of the first major responses of my department, the then department of state development, manufacturing, infrastructure and planning, and also a very strong response by the government. We are already well regarded nationally for our planning efficiency, but the planning law changes we made over the past four months have also led the nation.

We were the first state to declare a public health emergency to provide business and industry support funding and to amend our planning laws to help manage the crisis. Those actions yielded positive results early. Planning laws provided flexibility needed for supermarkets to restock around the clock, 24/7, amid high demand for essentials, as everyone knows: grocery items, cleaning products and personal items including toilet paper. Temporary use licences have allowed businesses to adapt to the demands created by the pandemic, like the need for huge amounts of hand sanitiser or to set up respiratory clinics. We have extended time frames for undertaking improved development by six months. That takes away one more worry, giving investors and developers certainty to progress job-creating projects.

Today I am announcing further changes to planning laws to support economic recovery by reducing red tape and simplifying planning processes. From 28 September it will be easier for businesses to set up and trade and for critical infrastructure to be built, leading to more job creation. Councils can now be more flexible and responsive in driving economic activity in their local communities. These are smart fixes. The government regards these as smart fixes, but they also make significant changes to suit the community and to support small business.

Councils can now simplify or remove some current planning approvals, including business tenancy changes within an existing building, such as a hairdresser replacing a cafe in a local town centre. That is a very simple approval that, from 28 September, a council will be able to provide. If one business regrettably closes but another business wants to open quickly and they see an opportunity, we should make that as easy for them as possible.

I know that in regional and rural parts of the state—and I am looking to the member for Toowoomba North, going to places like Dalby and Warwick, although I know they are not in his electorate—making sure that the main street has shops full and filled with tenants is very important. I know that it is difficult out there at the moment. However, we want to make sure that can happen quickly. Businesses starting up or relocating that is anticipated in that zone, so supporting start-ups—people who want to start a business, not just shift a business—and minor building expansions will be able to be dealt with quickly to allow businesses to accommodate social distancing requirements. We are making that as smooth and as easy as possible, particularly for small business.

The amendments will also see approvals for critical infrastructure such as hospitals and schools streamlined right into construction. In doing so, there has been careful consideration to ensure that appropriate checks and balances are in place.

Our economic recovery plan does focus on small business. These are some of the measures we are now taking and making permanent to ensure we can reduce red tape and get businesses operating as quickly as possible. My father owned and operated a small business and my grandparents owned and operated a small business, so I know from experience in my own life about the challenges of running a small business. I want to support those Queenslanders who are tough and resilient and want to make a dollar and get ahead in small business in the best way we can.

CHAIR: In the Greenbank shops I have seen a cafe that pivoted into being a florist and is now also selling pot plants. There are lots of innovative small businesses and it is great to support them.

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, I refer to page 22 of the CFER statement. Can you please advise the committee how the government's capital program will contribute to the economic recovery in Queensland?

Mr DICK: Thank you, member for Bundamba, for your interest in infrastructure. I know that you are very proud of a big shed that is being built out your way, the new Rheinmetall Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence.

Mr McCALLUM: Wonderful things are happening there.

Mr DICK: It is extraordinary to see that facility come out of ground and the work that will now be generated at a critical time. It was not anticipated at the time the government entered into that agreement, but now more than ever we need those sorts of advanced manufacturing projects in Queensland.

Earlier we talked about certainty. Certainty in the infrastructure pipeline is very important to support industry confidence, to protect jobs and to attract further private sector investment. That will accelerate economic recovery and create jobs. At the start of the pandemic, very early, we affirmed our \$51.8 billion infrastructure guarantee—our four-year \$51.8 billion program. We released our Capital Program 2020 update in August. That details \$13.9 billion in investment in infrastructure across 2020-21, reinforcing our commitment to invest in infrastructure, particularly in the regions. This financial year, 60 per cent of that investment will be outside of the Greater Brisbane region. Our capital commitment is already set to increase, having released CFER. Since we have released that, our capital commitment is already set to increase to \$14.8 billion in 2020-21. That will create 45,000 jobs across Queensland. That is an increase of \$1.857 billion compared to the estimate at the time of the 2019-20 budget.

The government, as every committee member knows, has a strong focus on delivering infrastructure. Recently we announced the Building Acceleration Fund, which is a great example of how we can stimulate investment. That will see government partnering with developers, councils and industry on catalytic infrastructure to generate private sector investment. It was announced only a few weeks ago, and we have already received 157 applications.

We have another eight projects that will leverage more than \$330 million in private sector investment over the next two years: the Northshore stage 1 waterfront development; the Carseldine Village development; Lumina at the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct—and I know that the member for Bonney has a strong interest in the Gold Coast Health and Knowledge Precinct; bringing forward plans to expand the increasingly popular Cohort co-working innovation and laboratory space, which is almost at capacity; the Yeppoon development, with work starting on the Capricorn Coast rail trail in coming weeks and essential structural works on the heritage rail station now nearing Brisbane

completion; construction will begin in coming weeks on the Roma Street student health accommodation precinct by Woollam Constructions, creating 15 jobs; at the Sunshine Coast Industrial Park, initial bulk earthworks for stage 2 will commence in coming weeks, which has the Sunshine Coast Council approval, and a development application for stage 2 of the industrial park has been lodged with the Sunshine Coast Council—industrial development is going well on the Sunshine Coast; the Yeronga Priority Development Area development, a new Yeronga Community Centre and civil works associated with the redevelopment of the former Yeronga TAFE site will create 33 construction jobs and facilitate further private sector investment; and at the Oxley Priority Development Area, civil works for stage 1 are currently being planned and, subject to necessary approvals, the \$5.2 million investment, supporting 17 construction jobs, will commence this year. Capital investment, such as our recently announced renewable energy zones, will start rolling out further investment as a consequence of that. That is the government partnering with the private sector to benefit the private sector and to create jobs for all of Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you, Treasurer. I note that the Treasurer's enthusiasm for major projects has meant that the government's time for questions has slightly exceeded the previous block and we will make that up. The deputy chair is dutifully keeping an eye on this. I turn to the opposition. Member for Everton, do you have a question?

Mr MANDER: I do, thank you, Mr Chair. Treasurer, with reference to your announcement of SPER proactive debt management, can you advise what the current SPER debt level is and what the SPER debt level was when the Palaszczuk Labor government was first elected?

Mr DICK: It is around \$1¼ billion, I think, member for Everton. That is on the parliamentary record. I am happy to try to ascertain the growth in SPER debt for you. You are right: the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review sets out a clear pathway to recover more money that is owed to Queenslanders, and they deserve that. I do not apologise for recovering money that properly belongs with the people of Queensland. I have announced the debt recovery and compliance program. We will invest \$74.9 million to increase revenue and collections by \$488.1 million over the next 3½ years, which is a return on investment of more than 500 per cent. That will be proactive debt management of SPER and also increased audits and investigations for state taxation and royalties. We need to act to recover money from people who owe money to other people in Queensland.

The amount of SPER debt impaired at the end of last financial year was \$90 million less than its level on 30 June 2017, due to improved debt collection and finalisation by SPER. SPER has significantly reduced the debt pool's rate of growth, from 8.7 per cent under the LNP to just 1.7 per cent now. I am happy to try to provide those figures for you over the past eight years, member for Everton. I will get that information.

CHAIR: It was growing at 8.7 per cent and now it is growing at 1.7 per cent?

Mr DICK: That is correct. There is a seven per cent reduction in the debt pool's rate of growth.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, is the State Penalty Enforcement Registry still under assessment by the Crime and Corruption Commission for reported allegations of corrupt conduct?

Mr DICK: Chair, I cannot in all fairness speak for the CCC. Matters have been referred to the Crime and Corruption Commission and I am not aware of any report that it has made.

CHAIR: Treasurer, I do not ask you to speak for the CCC. It is also probably stretching the boundaries of the charge that we have been given by the House, but thank you for the answer.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, in June this year it was reported that 33 public servants working on SPER's ICT program were locked out of government offices. The Commissioner of State Revenue, Mark Jackson, stated—

Given changing circumstances, a decision has been made to not further progress work on a replacement ICT system at this time.

Will the Treasurer advise how much was spent on this ICT replacement program?

Mr DICK: When COVID-19 hit Queensland, we had to work fast to reorganise the Public Service. Across government, many agencies took actions to ensure we could meet the demands, including using outside service provision where required. I make no apologies and the government makes no apologies for acting fast to ensure Queenslanders were kept safe and important services were provided.

On this matter I am advised that, ordinarily, the State Penalties Enforcement Registry engages Smart Service Queensland, within the Department of Housing and Public Works, to provide SPER with inbound and outbound contact centre services. Those services involve Smart Service Brisbane

Queensland providing approximately 100 to 130 customer service agents. However, I am advised that in March 2020 Smart Service Queensland was experiencing an increased workload in priority 1 calls due to COVID-19, which is perfectly understandable, and also due to the local government elections.

To allow Smart Service Queensland to focus on those priority tasks, I am advised that the former under treasurer made the decision to engage a company to temporarily take over SPER contact centre services. The cost of the additional services was \$5.2 million, which I understand is consistent with the level of service provided. I understand that, with other engagements, total expenditure by Queensland Treasury since 2018 has been \$7.857 million, as has been publicly reported.

As the member for Everton has referred to, certain matters regarding SPER and procurement have been referred to the CCC for investigation. That happened after my appointment as Treasurer and Ms Rachel Hunter's appointment as Under Treasurer, and I welcome that. If the opposition have any concerns, I would encourage them to refer them to the CCC also. I would ask them to forward that to them.

Mr DAMETTO: With the economic and fiscal review, the Treasurer announced that \$3 billion would be allocated before the state election on measures to stimulate the state's economy. The Treasurer has previously stated that the agriculture and resources sectors are cornerstones for industry here in Queensland. Will those industries be eligible for support through this \$3 billion to help support regional and rural Queensland during this time?

Mr DICK: Member for Hinchinbrook, I acknowledge your presence here today. You did not have to be here. You have a large regional and rural electorate. It is a very large and diverse community and I know that you are keen to return to your community. I want to acknowledge your presence here today because of your interest in economic recovery. You know that all parts of Queensland are suffering and, because we have such a large and diverse state, the response of the government must be tailored for the incredibly different communities that make up the tapestry of Queensland. Thank you for making the effort to remain in Brisbane to participate in this hearing.

We will, of course, look to continue to support agricultural industries in Queensland. You are right: we are very fortunate in Queensland because not only do we have a diverse state but also our people are very diverse and our industries are very diverse. The diversification of our economy has allowed us, in some ways, to ride out the storm a little bit. Unlike economies like New South Wales and Victoria, which are highly dependent on service industries, two of the great mainstays of the Queensland economy are agriculture and mining, and they have done much of the heavy lifting. I have acknowledged that. In fact, one of the first things I did when I became Treasurer was to acknowledge the contribution that agriculture and mining have made to Queensland and our resources industry. Yes, we will look to support that.

We have made a number of announcements already as part of Unite and Recover, not only to support regional communities but also to support agriculture. A number of those were brought to government by industry, particularly organisations like AgForce and the QFF, and also by Minister Furner, who works very closely. There will be a combination of investments that we will make. We will make it in not only supporting agriculture but also supporting those parts of the economy that facilitate and assist agricultural producers. We will bridge the digital divide, making sure that if you are in a cane shed somewhere with your equipment, whether you are running your business on your farm or in town or some combination, you are not disadvantaged. We know that the NBN has had such a woeful outcome in Queensland when it had such an initial excellent design. That was really wrecked by Malcolm Turnbull. Anyway, today is not the day for that.

We are making sure we facilitate those sorts of investments in hard infrastructure and in economic enabling infrastructure. I know that you are interested in water infrastructure as well, member for Hinchinbrook. There is road infrastructure, ports and those sorts of investments but also the digital investment, as well as direct investments to support agriculture going forward. That is very much on our radar and we will continue to support our mighty agricultural industries that have done so much.

A number of businesses have been eligible for relief measures through Jobs Support Loans. I am happy to perhaps brief you later. Combining Townsville and the Far North, as of 4 September Jobs Support Loans have totalled around \$108 million. There were about 8½ thousand applicants for those. There is payroll tax relief, land tax relief and small business adaption grants. There have been 1,801 grants for businesses in the Far North and 907 grants in the Townsville region, totalling around \$23 million. We have invested in a number of relief measures.

In our Accelerated Works Program, supporting that infrastructure I have talked about, there is \$90 million for roadworks in the Townsville region and \$25 million to widen and seal priority sections of the Gregory Developmental Road between Charters Towers and the Lynd. That will support 27 jobs. I know that it is not directly in your area, member for Hinchinbrook, but you pay close attention to what is happening in the region. There is \$23 million for additional overtaking lanes on the Flinders Highway between Townsville and Charters Towers, supporting 76 jobs. There is \$37½ million in the Far North as well. There are more investments programmed and there will be more that we will do to support agriculture as well.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, how much of the SPER debt is currently impaired?

Mr DICK: I do not have that number for you now, member for Everton, but I am happy to try to get that for you by the end of the hearing today. I think I have answered some questions on notice, too, so we will check those as well.

CHAIR: It might be that the officers can find the question on notice that has already been put for answered.

Mr DICK: Yes. I will do my best to respond to the committee today, Chair.

CHAIR: We have made note of that, too.

Mr MANDER: With regard to the savings measures announced on 9 July, will the Treasurer advise the cost of all external consultancies to the government since July of this year, please?

Mr DICK: Again, I do not have that number available with me now. If I cannot provide that to the committee today, I am happy to take that on notice. As the member for Everton has heard, we made almost \$320 million in savings for the Queensland taxpayer since I announced that savings plan in July. That is, with respect, not bad going in effectively two months. That is the sort of effective response I am trying to drive as Treasurer. It is not austerity. It is not dropping the anvil of austerity on Queensland, but it is saying to Queenslanders that, as every individual, family and business is now tailoring their cloth to respond to the impact of COVID-19, government has to do the same thing. We have to focus on frontline job creation, infrastructure and delivering our economic recovery plan.

There will be consultancies that the government will use. Every government uses them. The LNP government used them under Campbell Newman. We have used them. It is not the priority of the government, but we will use them. I will be up-front about that. We are trying to make savings. Reducing consultancy costs is an important area for the government that we are focusing on, along with those other measures I have mentioned: ICT savings, marketing and growth in the non-front line. We are working on those aspects very closely. Chair, I am happy to come back to the committee.

CHAIR: I note that the Treasurer has undertaken to either come back at the end of the day or take the question on notice.

Mr DICK: We have a bit of time left, I note, so hopefully we will be able to pull that together.

CHAIR: We have noted that you have undertaken to do this.

Mr MANDER: Can the Treasurer advise how many new external consultants have been engaged since July of this year?

Mr DICK: I do not have that number with me. I am trying to be helpful today. It is not referenced in the fiscal and economic review. I am happy to take questions on notice, of course, in the House, but—

CHAIR: Sorry to interrupt, Treasurer. Given the nature of the question and your answer to the last question, that is probably another one that was sought to be answered in the same way as the question already put. Would you endeavour to try to answer that question by the end of this session, noting that is a fairly detailed question?

Mr DICK: Yes, I will.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, I take it that was what your intent was to put the question?

Mr MANDER: My intent is to get an answer, yes, thank you.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, do you have another question?

Mr MANDER: Still talking about the proposed savings, will the Treasurer advise how much the government has saved by shutting down social media accounts and black-and-white printing?

Mr DICK: Yes, I am pleased to be able to do that, member for Everton. I think we have some details on that. I know that you thought that was humorous, member for Everton—

Mr MANDER: It was your announcement, Treasurer.

Mr DICK: We need to make sure we focus on the front line. I am sure if the number of social media accounts had expanded, we would have been criticised. I am pleased to report to the committee that the social media presence of the government has been reduced because we have closed 86 accounts since I announced that. I am pleased that the public sector has responded to have a more focused approach to targeted social media. We all know that there are many ways for governments to communicate messages, and social media is a platform upon which many Queenslanders engage with sourcing news, information and data. I am pleased that we have been able to close 86 accounts in a little bit over two months. I am pleased to be able to do that. I think that is what governments should do. Frankly, I do not think governments should be criticised for trying to focus on the front line—making sure that communication staff are focused on jobs, infrastructure and the frontline delivery of services as well. I am pleased that the government responded to that.

I can report to the committee that annual reports will be delivered in black-and-white design, with limited infographics and design elements. I announced that and the Public Service, I am pleased, has responded. Compliance with that will be monitored. We are also finalising a range of activities that will align with the announcements I have previously made. I am glad that there has been a response to that, and that will continue, to ensure we do what Queenslanders expect us to do: focus on the front line, create jobs, stimulate the economy, deliver our economic recovery plan for all parts of our state, including regions, and keep a close eye on social media activity.

Mr MANDER: I accept all that, but how much money did you save from that?

Mr DICK: It is part of the \$319.8 million that we have saved. It is not bad going in two months.

Mr MANDER: Specifically, thanks, Treasurer. How much money was associated with the closing down of social media accounts and black-and-white printing?

Mr DICK: I have already given you my answer, member for Everton. I am not going to disaggregate those things. We are going to give you \$320 million back; I thought you would be thanking me!

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, I refer to page 26 of the CFER statement and specifically to fiscal principle No. 6. Can you please advise the committee what action you are taking to deliver sustainable employment levels in the Public Service?

Mr DICK: As you have heard in the committee hearing this morning, in July we responded to the COVID-19 crisis by implementing a range of measures to reduce expenditure. From 1 July we capped the number of frontline public servants in Queensland. For any vacancies within that cap, departments were directed to recruit internally with a greater focus on the front line, as I have said earlier today in this hearing. We directed that the practice of nurses, teachers and other frontline staff being seconded into corporate offices cease. As I said on 9 July, if you are paid as a nurse, we want you to work as a nurse, looking after patients. That has never been more important than at this time.

To reduce the number of highly paid senior public servants, we also directed that some roles not be filled when they are vacated. There are no forced redundancies. We are not forcing people out of positions, but when positions become vacant we will look at that position and look carefully as to whether that needs to continue. If there is a job to be done and it can be done by a Queensland public servant, it should be done by a Queensland public servant and not an external consultant. Roles being performed by external contractors have been reviewed and, where possible, they will be wound up across the Public Service.

The Public Service Commission report shows that over the six months to March 2020 the majority of the growth lies in Health, 44.53 per cent; Education, 28.87 per cent; Police, 6.97 per cent; and Corrective Services, 5.65 per cent. I know that we may be criticised for growing those beyond population, but that is what you need to do. In health, for example, the impacts of the ageing of the population and the cost of health services delivery are economic impacts on how you fund health care. The ageing of the population, the growing of the population and the impacts of COVID all require frontline staff, so the numbers will always be higher.

There will be retirements and resignations—people moving on—so you will need to appoint people to those vacancies. Some of the reasons for that include: commencement of graduate medical, nursing and allied health staff, which is what Queenslanders expect; an increase in student enrolment growth in 2020 due to a full cohort of students in year 12; increase in police, partially due to recruit graduation being brought forward in response to increasing COVID-19 demands; additional custodial and corrections officers for Operation Certitude, which is the private prison transfer to the public sector. We know that the CCC reported very clearly to government that the operation of private prisons was a corruption risk and we made a decision as a government to ensure that we would

operate those in the public sector. That is a very important thing. The overall increase is in line with the government's commitment to maintain vital frontline service delivery prior to announcing anything else. We have to make sure we focus on that.

On the issue of contractors employed by Queensland Treasury, I refer the member for Everton to question on notice No. 815, asked by the member for Broadwater. As of 11 August, Treasury had a contractor head count of 102. That was a reduction of 43 since 1 May 2020. In Treasury that is a significant reduction. That is about a third. We have reduced contractors by a third in Treasury—by 43—to 102. That is the start that we are making in Treasury. I think that is an important response to the policy position set out by the government.

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, thank you for that answer on a key initiative as part of the fiscal and economic review. I would like to ask about another key initiative. Can you please provide further details to the committee about the contribution of \$500 million to the Renewable Energy Fund and how that is going to contribute to the economic recovery in Queensland and the government's target of delivering 50 per cent of the state's energy needs from renewable sources by 2030?

Mr DICK: Member for Bundamba, I know that you have a strong interest in the economics of energy in Queensland as well as both traditional methods of energy generation and renewable energy. You have shown particular interest in that in your career. I thank you for your question about that. I know the value you will add to the parliament in terms of your interest in those areas.

As you know, we will invest \$500 million in the Renewable Energy Fund. That will mean our publicly owned energy corporations can increase public ownership of commercial renewable energy projects and supporting infrastructure. Partnering with the private sector, for example, to increase renewables investment is a key platform of our economic recovery plan to support jobs and growth. The Renewable Energy Fund will allow energy government owned corporations to increase ownership of commercial renewable energy projects and supporting infrastructure, including direct ownership, as well as partnerships with the private sector. The existing skills and expertise of the energy government owned corporations are very significant and extensive. They are the best government owned energy corporations in the country. As they are publicly owned, we have been able to use the revenue of those GOCs to return money to Queenslanders—\$200 has been returned to Queensland households and \$500 to small businesses and sole traders. That is something we returned to Queenslanders because we own those assets. If those assets are owned by companies based in Toronto, Paris or in any other country in the world, governments will find it impossible to do that. That was part of our economic response.

The skills and expertise of those energy GOCs will be used to engage with market proponents and identify commercial proposals with opportunities for return to government. The fund will consider investment proposals that support additional renewable energy generation and storage capacity as we transition to our 50 per cent renewable energy target by 2030. That is a very consistent position we have taken which provides a consistent message to the market about where investment needs to go.

Importantly, investments must create new and ongoing employment opportunities in Queensland consistent with the government's employment and procurement policy. We have radically and significantly changed procurement in government through our Buy Queensland procurement strategy. All investment proposals considered through the fund will need to demonstrate that the Queensland Government Procurement Policy and our 'Best practice principles: quality safe workplaces' will be applied and enforced across projects to support local jobs and businesses and drive broader economic, environmental and social outcomes.

Investments are expected to be made progressively over the next three years as opportunities are identified and commercial proposals are developed by government owned corporations and approved through the fund. That will, of course, complement our \$154 million investment in renewable energy zones to connect up the renewable energy network that the Premier announced a few weeks ago. They will have the renewable energy resources in close proximity to customer demand infrastructure to support significant renewables investment. We will develop a mandate for our energy government owned corporations to enable the fund to commence as soon as possible. We are working on that at the moment. It will include further detail in relation to the scope and operation of the fund. Those mandates will include that and the further assessment criteria for investment proposals. Since we announced that on Monday, a lot of work is already happening to get those mandates up so we can stand up the fund and then, most importantly of all, get investment going.

CHAIR: Turning to page 5 of the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review and the tax relief section, could you please advise the committee how the payroll tax relief package is assisting businesses in Queensland?

Mr DICK: The hammer blow inflicted on the Queensland economy has fallen disproportionately on the small business sector. COVID-19 has caused that, particularly in service related industries. Queensland already has one of the lowest payroll tax rates in the country—that is something that has been consistently delivered by Labor governments—and has actively supported small businesses through a range of assistance programs including our Jobs and Regional Growth Fund, the Made in Queensland program and our manufacturing hub grants which are associated with our manufacturing hubs in Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton.

The onset of COVID meant we had to do more. We acted swiftly to provide additional support to the small business sector, putting payroll tax refunds into the bank accounts of more than 16,000 Queensland businesses or giving Queensland businesses payroll tax holidays, helping support their cash flow and viability at a terribly difficult time and, very importantly, ensuring the security of the workers employed by those businesses. We deferred the payroll tax liability for more than 10,000 businesses, regardless of their size, so that no Queensland businesses eligible for deferral will have to make a payroll tax payment this calendar year and until economic activity has recovered further. We provided a payroll tax exemption for wages subsidised by the federal government's JobKeeper payment, land tax rebates to support land tax payers and their commercial and residential tenants as well as a three-month deferral of land tax liabilities for all land tax payers for the 2020-21 assessment year and a waiver of the land tax foreign surcharge for 2019-20.

We provided an additional waiver of payroll tax for small to medium business with annual payrolls of \$6½ million or less for July and August and extended the payroll tax deferral to allow businesses of all sizes to pay their deferred liabilities in instalments across a 12-month period from January 2021 to January 2022 as opposed to one lump sum in January next year. These payroll tax measures are supporting businesses in Logan, which I know is of great importance to you, member for Logan. Some 649 Logan businesses have been approved for deferral or refund of payroll tax, with relief totalling almost \$17.96 million. Other initiatives supporting Logan businesses include \$1.1 million in land tax relief across 330 land parcels and a \$104.5 million boost to roadworks in the Logan area. That is just one part of Queensland that has benefited. Those benefits have been distributed across the state and will help Queenslanders wherever they live—in the city, in the country, in the bush and in the regions.

Mr BROWN: Treasurer, could you please explain to the committee how the objectives of the government's unite and recover economic plan align with CFER?

Mr DICK: Thank you for referring to the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review, which is the purpose of the examination today. I appreciate that. They are connected and interrelated. As you know, member for Capalaba, our government was the first in Australia to recognise the threat posed by COVID-19. We were the first to move. We recognised, like many economists—and I mentioned that earlier—including Deloitte Access Economics, that if you cannot contain the virus you cannot open up the economy. Our unite and recover economic plan is the dividend of the success of our health response. We have moved to keep Queenslanders safe and then we have moved to get them back to work.

The unite and recover plan recognises the importance of building vital infrastructure, strengthening Queensland industries and supporting growth. We have to find a pathway to restore the strength of the Queensland economy and then to grow going forward. That is very important. A series of measures, currently totally \$7 billion, include key initiatives to strengthen our health response and support the business sector, as I have said, through payroll and land tax concessions, loans, grants and so on.

I honoured the commitment I made to deliver the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review before the election. I delivered that on Monday. That review, as the honourable members of the committee know, included an update on the impacts of the pandemic on Queensland's revenues and economic growth as well as further details on the current financial challenges Queensland continues to face because of its lingering and ongoing effects. CFER also included an intention to borrow an additional \$4 billion to invest in the Queensland economy, which I have announced very clearly and very publicly, in line with the recommendation of the Governor of the Reserve Bank and the enthusiastic encouragement of the federal government. This will bring the total of our COVID response package to \$11 billion. I have mentioned the billion dollars that will be invested in the Renewable Energy Fund and the Queensland Business Development Fund. We need to keep Queenslanders safe, we need to restore the strength of our economy and we need to find a pathway to growth to create more jobs. That is what we are all focused on.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, I go back to the \$3 billion worth of savings that you announced on 9 July. Could you tell us how many public servants come under the internal replacement policy?

Mr DICK: I am not quite sure where that is referred to in CFER.

CHAIR: I missed the question.

Mr MANDER: The Treasurer has been talking about the savings plan. Part of the savings plan was an announcement about the internal replacement of public servants. I simply want to know how many public servants fall under that policy.

CHAIR: I appreciate what you said. Treasurer, do you have much to add for the committee on the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review?

Mr DICK: I am happy to respond on workforce issues for the member for Everton. I announced a range of savings measures on 9 July—\$3 billion over four years. That includes a number of measures relating to the public sector workforce in Queensland: taking a highly disciplined approach to managing full-time-equivalent employees within approved caps; reinforcing frontline services; reducing senior executive service roles; and reducing the use of external consultants and contractors. Departments have been provided with a range of support to deliver that. External recruitment processes are limited to frontline roles to ensure essential frontline services continue to be delivered.

Everyone in the Public Service I suppose is the simple answer to member for Everton. Everyone in the Public Service will be captured by these measures, both frontline and non-frontline staff. Everyone who works in the Public Service will be captured by that. Where we can we will seek to fill vacancies in the Public Service internally first. That is very important to support the front line. We will then recruit only as necessary. That is the priority of the government.

There will be a natural reduction in the size of the senior executive service. The Public Service Commission is giving oversight to that. I can report to the committee that the state executive service or state executive service equivalent positions have been reduced by 13 through natural attrition since I announced those savings measures in July. That is an estimated saving of \$2,663,197 per annum. We are making some progress there in two months. That is part of our \$319.8 million in savings we have made so far and we will continue to focus on that.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, I want to confirm that. You are saying that all public servants will come under this policy? I thought initially you said that it was only non-frontline public servants. I just want to confirm that I heard that.

Mr DICK: Sorry, I should clarify. All of those matters that I have announced as part of the review—the whole Public Service will be subject to those review measures: disciplined approach to managing full-time-equivalent employees within approved caps; reinforcing frontline services; reducing senior executive roles; and reducing the use of external consultancies and contractors. That will be worked across the entire Public Service.

Mr MANDER: Sorry, I just want to have that clarified.

CHAIR: We have had the question and answer.

Mr DICK: I am happy for you to ask the question again.

CHAIR: I think the Treasurer baulked the first time because he had answered a very similar question previously. For the third time—

Mr MANDER: I want to get it absolutely crystal clear. There will only be internal replacements in all of the Public Service for the rest of this financial year?

CHAIR: To be honest, that was actually answered. You may have missed it. Treasurer, you may wish to respond.

Mr DICK: I think I gave a comprehensive response to that, yes.

Mr MANDER: You obviously do not want to clarify that, which I can understand.

Mr DICK: That is not fair, member for Everton.

CHAIR: Hold on. If you were paying attention to the answer, it is there. When you go the transcript, the answer will be very clear.

Mr MANDER: That is good. We will find that.

CHAIR: I do not want to have judgements about answers.

Mr MANDER: With respect, Chair, the reason I wanted that clarified is that when this was originally announced—

CHAIR: No, member for Everton!

Mr MANDER:—the Treasurer said it was only non-frontline staff. This is a major shift with regard to policy.

CHAIR: I do not think you listened to the answer to the question. Member for Everton, we will not be prosecuting an argument, because I can engage in that too. We want decorum where we progress through questions and answers.

Mr MANDER: Will the Treasurer advise how much the Queensland state government has paid to the Palaszczuk Labor government linked lobby group Anacta Strategies?

Mr DICK: I do not think that is in any way relevant to the hearing today; is it, Chair?

CHAIR: It is not.

Mr MANDER: It is expenditure of the state government.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Everton. I refer you to what the House has committed us to do. We are here to look at the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review and to ask questions about that. That is what the House has charged us to do. I also note that the secretariat has the motion agreed to by the House. I have it, too. I can give you a copy of the motion and the terms of reference. That might be useful for your questions.

Mr MANDER: Chair, if I may, page 15 of the CFER lists the expenses of the government, and my question relates to the expenses of the government. It is quite a simple question: how much money has been paid to that lobby group?

Mr DICK: Chair, I am happy to provide a response to the question.

CHAIR: I know that you are happy to provide a response at this stage, but we have been charged by the House to look at the broad fiscal and economic review in response to the global pandemic. The questions we have should be relevant to the inquiry the House has given us. That is what the committee has to report back to the House on.

Mr DICK: I would say two things. Earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition said that the next election would be fought on the economy. I would welcome questions from members of the committee on the economy, if that statement was in fact true. In relation to the ongoing management and employment of public servants, I will table a copy of the savings and debt plan for members of the committee. I would ask the member of Everton—he made a comment at the end—to not misrepresent what I said in my answer. I made a comprehensive answer, member for Everton, and I would refer you to that. That is my response to your question.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, the government's CEFR revealed that in the last financial year the government's infrastructure program was cut by almost \$1.3 billion—from \$13.7 billion to \$12.4 billion. At a time when our economy was in recession through the March and June quarters, when infrastructure should have been fast-tracked to stimulate the economy, why was the government's capital program cut by \$1.3 billion in the last financial year?

CHAIR: You are straying into a speech, member for Everton, but you have been really good compared to the last session. I want to give you that—

Mr MANDER: Encouragement?

CHAIR: Encouragement—that is it! Thank you, member for Everton.

Mr DICK: I made a comprehensive statement to the House yesterday on infrastructure expenditure—a comprehensive statement—that made it clear there were no cuts. I will write to the Speaker on the matters raised by the member for Everton.

Let me clarify that again. Under the LNP Newman government, capital spending was cut every year. As the COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review reinforces, the Palaszczuk government has made no cuts to the capital program since we were elected in 2015. The amount of capital delivered by the Palaszczuk government has increased every year since we came to office, supporting tens of thousands of jobs around the state.

Altogether we are investing \$51.8 billion in infrastructure investment over the next four years, supporting 44,000 jobs. Over the previous and current financial years, we will deliver \$1.3 billion more in capital projects than we promised at the last budget. I made that clear in the House yesterday.

Our capital program includes capital purchases and capital grants to authorities like local councils and lease acquisitions. Our delivery of the capital program is also streets ahead of the LNP, who delivered less than 90 per cent of their capital program, which was smaller than ours in the first place.

In 2019-20 our government had delivered 96 per cent of all capital projects identified in last year's budget. In 2020-21 we are on track to deliver a capital program 114 per cent the size of the program identified in last year's budget. This is \$1.9 billion in projects this financial year that we are bringing forward to back jobs as part of our economic recovery.

CHAIR: I am disappointed that there was no mention of the capital infrastructure spending on the Mount Lindesay Highway because it is fantastic, but I will accept the answer.

Mr DAMETTO: Treasurer, has Treasury put aside funding to help fund things like the Townsville Hospital and Health Service's COVID recovery plan, which stipulates funding to be allocated to dialysis and CT scanners in rural hospitals like Ingham and Charters Towers?

Mr DICK: Certainly we have invested significantly in healthcare services. I cannot advise you on those specific projects that you raise, but I can inform you that as at 31 July for the Townsville region—which is home to the largest and best hospital in Northern Australia—for the COVID-19 health response across hospital and health services—and it is probably likely to be more than just the Townsville HHS, but I am not absolutely certain of that—and the Queensland Ambulance Service, there has been a cost incurred of approximately \$357 million in operational costs. Of those operating costs, \$195 million has been incurred by hospital and health services and \$56 million has been incurred by the Queensland Ambulance Service. There has been significant investment there.

Member for Hinchinbrook, as you know, where we can, where it is sustainable, it is important to increase health services, including dialysis and other activities, to regional communities. We have certainly made a strong commitment as a government to do that. I cannot advise you specifically on those projects, but I do know that in a range of communities we have rebuilt hospitals and we have built new hospitals in Roma, Kingaroy and on the Atherton Tablelands. I was very pleased to authorise that expenditure as the then health minister, along with my colleagues. We are going to continue to fund the Townsville Hospital and Health Service and that hospital which is such an important service.

Distributing services to communities is important, too, so that people have less distance to travel. One of the lessons that I think everyone has learned is how we can do business differently as part of COVID. Distributing and delivering services through telehealth has been a very significant change. You can go to your local health clinic and you can get an appointment locally. You will not have to travel into Townsville to do that. You will be able to go to your local clinic for a range of appointments and treatments, but some activities will need to be conducted in the community as well. I cannot give you a specific answer on dialysis. I recall the Minister for Health announcing something on that in the House earlier—perhaps in the August sitting. Expanding services where we can is something we will continue to do.

Mr MANDER: Treasurer, with regard to the 2020-21 financial year forecast, could you please advise the committee which fiscal principles of the government have actually been met?

Mr DICK: I am happy to speak to that. We do not deny COVID. We accept that COVID has had a significant impact. I heard a lot of discussion in the House this week on the nature of the fiscal principles and the government breaching the fiscal principles. The reality is that COVID has had a devastating impact on our economy. As a consequence, it has had a devastating impact in particular on government revenue and, as a consequence, we have been required to borrow more.

The COVID crisis has affected our fiscal aggregates and our six fiscal principles, and we have been very clear and up-front about that. That is a necessary consequence of the worst pandemic in a century. Our six fiscal principles have effectively been replaced by one fiscal principle—that is, saving Queensland jobs.

Fiscal principle 1 is to target ongoing reductions in Queensland's relative debt burden, as measured by the general government sector debt to revenue ratio. The general government debt to revenue ratio has increased to 77 per cent—a level not seen since the LNP was in office, when it peaked at 91 per cent without a pandemic and when there was a contraction in employment when 14,000 workers lost their job. That was announced eight years ago today.

Fiscal principle 2 is to target net operating surpluses to ensure any new capital investment in the general government sector is funded primarily through recurrent revenues rather than borrowing. When revenues collapse you still have to build things to create jobs, so we have to borrow to build. We do not apologise for that. We do not apologise because we are doing our best to save Queensland jobs.

Fiscal principle 3 is to manage the capital program to ensure a consistent flow of works to support jobs and the economy and reduce the risk of backlogs emerging. Earlier today I mentioned our \$51.8 billion infrastructure guarantee bringing forward capital works for the recovery. Our capital program, including capital purchases, will increase to \$14.8 billion this year—up from \$12.4 billion in 2019-20.

Fiscal principle 4 is to maintain competitive taxation. Own-source revenue for the general government sector is below the target of 8.5 per cent of state product. Queensland is and remains a low-taxing state, with Queenslanders paying \$700 less in tax than the rest of Australia and \$1,000 less than residents of New South Wales pay under a government led by the Liberal Party.

Fiscal principle 5 is to fully fund our defined benefit superannuation and WorkCover liabilities. Our defined benefit superannuation and WorkCover liabilities remain fully funded. We are the only state in Australia with a superannuation liability that is not only fully funded but also in surplus. Our government moved to ensure that was enshrined in law. I thank the members of the LNP in the last sitting week for supporting two critical parts of our economic recovery strategy: our Future Fund and also enshrining in law that the defined benefit superannuation fund should remain in surplus.

I also thank them for their support for another important cornerstone of economic recovery: our significant improvement to the royalties regime for petroleum and gas in Queensland including an increase in revenue which the LNP supported in the parliament. That will happen. Royalties will go up. I do believe that, even though the LNP say they will not support any new or increased taxes, they did on that occasion—and they did the right thing. They were supporting the state interest in doing that.

Fiscal principle 6 states—

Maintain a sustainable public service by ensuring that overall growth in full-time equivalent employees ... does not exceed population growth.

Average FTE growth over the two years to 2020-21 is expected to be 2.2 per cent, which is ahead of average population growth of 1¼ per cent. Population growth has collapsed, primarily as a result of international travel restrictions, while our frontline workers are fighting the pandemic. The growth in non-frontline FTEs, including health and education, is 0.34 per cent over the two years to 2020-21, below estimated population growth of 1¼ per cent.

We are also delivering a savings and debt plan, as I have said, which will reduce the number of consultants and contractors, cap non-frontline staff for 12 months and move to close merit non-frontline recruitment. We are doing everything we can to support the overall fiscal principle for Queensland, that is, to save Queensland jobs.

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, can you please expand and elaborate on your previous comments around what the government is doing to help small business in Queensland recover from COVID-19?

Mr DICK: Thanks very much, member for Bundamba. I appreciate your support for small business, as I said earlier. We believe that our plan is delivering for small business in Queensland. We were the first state to respond to COVID, the first major response package, and the largest of all states and territories. I spoke earlier about the increase in public expenditure which has assisted in ensuring the contraction in the economy is one of the smallest in the Commonwealth.

As part of our support for small business we have announced \$1 billion in concessional loans, jobs support loans, which are interest-free for the first 12 months to support businesses to keep Queenslanders in work. Ninety per cent of the loans taken out through the job support facility have been taken out by small business, so 90 per cent of those loans have been taken by small business employing fewer than 20 staff. It has really been a small business stimulation package.

We have announced more than \$1.35 billion in payroll tax relief measures to support the viability of Queensland businesses; delivered payroll tax refunds to the bank accounts of more than 16,000 Queensland businesses or given Queensland businesses payroll tax holidays, helping support their cash flows and viability, ensuring the security of the workers they employ; deferred payroll tax liabilities for more than 10,000 businesses, regardless of size, so that no Queensland businesses eligible for deferral will have to make a payroll tax payment this calendar year and until activity has recovered further; and provided a payroll tax exemption for wages subsidised by the federal government's JobKeeper payment to ensure the support flows through to help support businesses, including small businesses and their workers.

Our government has since provided an additional two-month waiver of payroll tax for small to medium sized businesses with annual payrolls of \$6.5 million or less for July and August. We extended the payroll tax deferral to allow businesses of all sizes to pay their deferred liabilities across

the 12-month period January 2021 to January 2022. We further extended the payroll tax exemption for the subsidised component of wages paid under the JobKeeper Payment Subsidy Program, consistent with the Australian government's recent announcement to extend the program to 28 March next year. There are land tax rebates to support land tax payers and their commercial and residential tenants; a three-month deferral of land tax liabilities for all land tax payers for the 2020-21 assessment year; a waiver of the land tax foreign surcharge for the 2019-20 year; \$500 million to assist workers and businesses who lose their jobs or income, including the creation of the Jobs Finder portal; \$100 million in electricity bill rebates for eligible small and medium sized businesses; and \$196 million in Small Business COVID-19 Adaption Grants. We talked about that earlier.

I announced the Backing Queensland Business Investment Fund, and maybe I should talk about the small to medium sized businesses that fund will support. It is focused on creating Queensland based jobs for companies that have a proven product and defined market opportunity but require significant capital to aggressively build scale or grow market share—so helping businesses scale up; are relatively mature, well beyond proof of concept, and are profitable or approaching profitability; are seeking capital to expand or restructure operations, enter new markets or finance significant acquisitions; and have well-established and reputable owners who are committed to growing the business from and in Queensland. I have also announced an important measure to support small business, abolishing transfer duty when eligible businesses restructure to reduce the cost of doing business and to cut red tape as we continue into the recovery.

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, I refer to page 6 of the CFER statement. Can you please advise the committee how Queensland's economic performance compares with other jurisdictions'?

Mr DICK: As you may have heard in the House yesterday, we have had a significant fall in economic activity in Queensland, but compared to other parts of the world we have done better. There was a 10 per cent fall in economic activity in the June quarter in the United States and a staggering 20.4 per cent fall in the United Kingdom between March and June. It is quite extraordinary, really. It is the worst quarterly result ever recorded in the United Kingdom. If there is one jurisdiction in the world that we know keeps good records we know it is the United Kingdom, in particular the Bank of England, which will have records going back literally hundreds of years, so to report the worst quarterly fall ever, beyond what happened in the Great Depression, is quite extraordinary.

That is the real challenge for economies like Queensland's and our nation's, and I think the truth is that if other jurisdictions around the world had managed the virus as effectively as Australia has then the international economy would be recovering faster. I think it is worthy to note for the committee that those jurisdictions where politicians have sought to involve themselves in clinical and medical decisions around the management of the virus have done worse. A third of the deaths in the world are referable to Brazil and the United States. It is a credit to all political leaders in this country how we have been able to manage the virus. I think it is very regrettable how that has changed in the last few days, but we hope that we can unite to ensure we do the best for our people.

As I have said, state final demand fell by 5.9 per cent in the June quarter. The Australian economy fell by seven per cent between March and June. The falls in other states were: six per cent in Western Australia; 8.5 per cent in Victoria; and 8.6 per cent in New South Wales. Across Australia there was a seven per cent fall in GDP, but there was a 7.4 per cent fall across the nation in domestic final demand, so that is excluding exports and international trade. Those quarterly figures reflect the period before Victoria went into stage 4, so one can only imagine—we do not have to imagine. We know the consequences of stage 4 restrictions in Queensland alone. If we went to stage 4 pre COVID, there would have been a \$5.3 billion impact. Even on our current economic activity, if we went to stage 4 like Victoria there would be a \$3.1 billion fall each month in output in Queensland, and that must be avoided at all possible costs. There are some businesses that are going to do it tough and they are going to find it hard to get through this financial year, but if you go to stage 4 restrictions you are certainly condemning businesses to not being able to get through. We must do everything we can to ensure small business in particular can survive through this financial year.

As the ABS highlighted, the fall in state final demand in Queensland was mitigated by that 4.6 per cent rise in government consumption expenditure, the largest rise of any state or territory, reflecting our economic strategy. As I said on Monday, in times of crisis when the private sector falls down the government must stand up. We must lift businesses and people up going forward, and that is what we will continue to do.

Mr BROWN: I know there are a lot of tradies and construction workers in my electorate of Capalaba, and COVID has had a significant impact on the construction industry. Can the Treasurer advise the committee what the government is doing to support construction jobs in Queensland?

Mr DICK: I might touch on that briefly. Chair, may I ask how long I have for this session of questions?

CHAIR: This takes us through to 11.15.

Mr DICK: I will try and address those issues raised by the member for Everton and other members of the committee in that period.

Member for Capalaba, I know that you are a great backer of the tradie workforce in our state and a very strong supporter of small businesses and sole traders—literally mum-and-dad operations in many cases—and I thank you for that, as I thank all members for their support of small business. As part of our stimulus response for the construction and building industry we reaffirmed our commitment to the \$15,000 First Home Owners Grant program. We announced a \$5,000 Regional Home Building Boost. We signed up to the \$25,000 HomeBuilder program the same day as New South Wales. Eligible new home buyers are eligible for up to \$45,000 in government support.

I just want to reinforce for the committee that the \$15,000 First Home Owners Grant is one of the most generous in the nation. It is 50 per cent higher than the home owner grant in New South Wales and the home owner grant offered in metropolitan Victoria, which, to be honest, is most of Victoria when you talk about metropolitan Victoria. Our Regional Home Building Boost provides extra incentives for all Queenslanders, not just first home buyers, to build a new home in the regions. We have done well.

I would also inform the committee that transfer duty on a \$500,000 home in Queensland is \$10,000 less than the average of other states because we are a low-taxing state. In June, the value of new lending for dwellings in Queensland increased by 19 per cent—higher than any other state and three times higher than the national average. In July, approvals for houses in Queensland increased by 17 per cent—higher than any other state and double the national average. We are making progress, and that is because strong economies can be enabled by strong borders.

I might take this opportunity if I may, Chair, to respond to some of the matters raised earlier. The member for Everton asked about the value of invoices issued for quarantine costs. As at 4 September, \$4.97 million worth of invoices have been issued. With respect to SPER debt, it increased from \$960 million in February 2015 to \$1.291 billion in June 2020. As at June 2020, I am advised the impaired debt level is \$325 million.

With respect to consultancies, in the savings and debt plan released on 9 July the government committed to reducing the use of consultants, contractors, labour hire and long-term agency temps. If the government is re-elected, as part of the 2020-21 state budget we will report on progress in implementing all key elements of the savings and debt plan including reductions in the use of contractors and consultants. I can confirm for all members—as all members probably know—that all department annual reports already provide details of expenditure on consultants and contractors, and they will of course be tabled for this year.

I should also add that SPER debt increased from \$761 million to \$961 million between June 2012 and February 2015, so there was a \$200 million increase under the LNP. As I said earlier, debt increased from \$960 million to \$1.29 billion under the Labor government, so that is comparatively similar.

CHAIR: We do have a little bit of time left. I know that members are keen to continue asking questions. Member for Bundamba, do you have a question?

Mr McCALLUM: Treasurer, I refer to page 23 of the CFER statement which covers intergovernmental financial relationships, specifically payments from the Australian government. What impact will the Commonwealth government's decision to discontinue its Indigenous and remote housing payments have on the provision of housing services to vulnerable communities, and are you aware of any other programs at risk of being de-funded?

Mr DICK: That is a critically important question, member for Bundamba, and I know that you have a particular interest, as all members of the parliament should, in what we are doing for Queenslanders who live in remote communities, particularly remote Indigenous communities. I regret to inform the committee that on 30 June 2018 the National Partnership on Remote Housing expired, and we have not seen the 2018-19 and the 2019-20 federal budgets make any provision for housing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland. In walking away from their responsibility to fund remote housing for First Nation people, the Australian government, the Morrison government, is failing to address overcrowding in rural and remote Indigenous communities, failing to invest to stimulate job creation and economic development in remote areas and, importantly, failing to contribute to national intergovernmental efforts to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

In October 2018 the Palaszczuk Labor government announced a \$40 million interim remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing program while it continued to seek new funding from the Australian government. Our commitment of \$40 million to a remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing capital program would provide indicative outputs of up to 49 new houses, 50 two-bedroom extensions and 35 lot developments for future housing construction across all former NPRH communities as well as Cherbourg, Yarrabah and the Torres shire area that did not receive any NPRH or NPARIH funding. In June 2019 our government also launched the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan—and I acknowledge Minister de Brenni's work on that—which reaffirmed Queensland's commitment to greater local leadership, community involvement and shared decision-making to enable local housing solutions.

The call should be made to Canberra. We should all be calling on the Morrison government. This is exactly the sort of economic stimulus that the community needs. We know what the Labor government's commitment is to infrastructure: \$51.8 billion. The federal government are spending \$100 billion on infrastructure across 10 years across the entire nation. I acknowledge what they have done with JobKeeper and JobSeeker, but now is the time for them to invest in infrastructure. This is exactly the type of program that they walked away from after around 50 years of investment by successive Commonwealth governments of both colours—Labor and the coalition. That funding should be restored as soon as possible to support those Indigenous First Nation communities and also to create jobs.

CHAIR: Thank you very much, Treasurer. We appreciate your time here presenting to the committee and we will incorporate the responses into the report that we present back to the parliament as we were charged to do. I note that you got back to the committee on all the questions that were not answered in the first stream. You have answered all of the questions so there are no questions taken on notice. Thank you again for your responses. You sought leave to table this document, the savings and debt plan. It has been copied and members have been able to peruse it, so we now grant leave to table the document.

Mr DICK: Thank you.

CHAIR: That concludes the hearing of the Economics and Governance Committee into the Queensland government's COVID-19 Fiscal and Economic Review. I would like to thank my fellow committee members and the visiting members who participated today. I especially thank Hansard. I also thank the audio team who had to do a special set-up for today. I thank them very much. A lot of special things go on behind the scenes in this parliament under these circumstances—spreading people out and all of those things. I wish to thank those staff. I also lastly wish to thank the committee secretariat. We really appreciate your support and everything you do for us. With that, I declare the hearing closed.

The committee adjourned at 11.17 am.