

## WEDNESDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2012

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### ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE—NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, SPORT AND RACING

#### Estimates Committee Members

Mr PJ Dowling (Chair)  
Ms JR Miller  
Mr SW Davies  
Mr AS Dillaway  
Mr JD Hathaway  
Mrs DC Scott  
Mr DE Shuttleworth  
Mr JM Trout  
Mr TS Mulherin

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#### In Attendance

Hon. SL Dickson, Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing  
Mr TL Mander, Assistant Minister for Sport and Racing  
Mr R Turner, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing**

Dr J Glaister, Director-General  
Mr A Broughton, Executive Director (Acting)  
Mr B Klassen, Deputy Director-General (Acting), Sport and Recreation Services  
Ms G O'Neill, Principal Project Officer, Governance and Strategies, Corporate Services  
Mr M Kelly, Executive Director, Office of Racing

#### **Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service**

Ms A Moody, Deputy Director-General (Acting)

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#### Committee met at 9.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare the estimates hearing of the Health and Community Services Committee open. On behalf of the committee I welcome the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, the departmental officers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Peter Dowling, the member of parliament for the Redlands. I chair the committee. Mrs Jo Miller, the member for Bundamba, is the deputy chair of the committee and is an apology for the proceedings through the first part of this session. She has been replaced in that capacity by the shadow minister, Tim Mulherin, the member for Mackay. I also recognise the other members of the committee: Steve Davies, the member for Capalaba; Aaron Dillaway, the member for Bulimba; John Hathaway, the member for Townsville; Desley Scott, the member for Woodridge, who is an apology from the proceedings this morning; Dale Shuttleworth, the member for Ferny Grove; and Michael Trout, the member for Barron River. We also have a visiting member, the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne, with us this morning.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained within the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. The committee will examine the Minister for National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing on his portfolios from 9 am till 10.30 am. The committee will suspend proceedings for the following breaks: morning tea will be from 10.30 to 10.45, lunch will be from 12.15 to 1 pm, afternoon tea will be from 3 pm to 3.15 pm and dinner will be from 6 pm to 7 pm. I remind all those participating today that these proceedings are similar to parliament, to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard, I remind members of the public that under standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcast and guidelines for camera operators, which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in the room. I ask that mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or switched to silent. Also, I remind you that food or drink is not permitted in the chamber.

It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. I intend to guide proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial limits and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers, directors-general, CEOs and their advisors that their answers to a question should be finalised so that other issues can be examined. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask the departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by a minister or director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing open for examination. The total time allocated is 90 minutes. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, if you wish to make an opening statement, I would remind you that there is a limit of five minutes to make such a statement.

**Mr DICKSON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman. Firstly, I wish to recognise some of the people around me: the Assistant Minister for Sport and Racing Tim Mander; the Director-General, Dr John Glaister; Chief of Staff, Mr Rhys Turner; Acting Executive Director with the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, Mr Aaron Broughton; Acting Deputy Director-General for Sport and Recreation Services, Mr Ben Klassen; Acting Deputy Director-General for the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Ms Annie Moody; and Executive Director of the Office of Racing, Mr Mike Kelly. I thank everybody for being here today. I hope we get some information out of today.

Good morning. As the minister of the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing, I made an ambitious commitment to open up our national parks to all types of recreation by improving access and implementing proper management of our Queensland national parks and state forests, to get Queenslanders more active through participation in sport and recreation activities and to revitalise our ailing racing sector by providing a proactive and supportive regulatory environment for the racing industry, which had been brought to its knees by the former Labor government.

Our \$18 million Get in the Game initiative is comprised of three programs—Get Playing, Get Started and Get Going—and is already a Newman government success. Get Playing will provide grants of up to \$100,000 in funding for sporting and recreation organisations for facilitating development, while Get Going will provide grants of up to \$10,000 for items and activities to assist clubs in attracting and retaining sports club members. Funding of \$6 million for Get Started will enable at least 40,000 voucher payments of up to \$150 for young Queenslanders over the next three years. Since the launch on 29 September, there has been a great turnout to information sessions, with around 1,200 people participating and more than 500 clubs signing up to be part of our Get Started voucher program. Feedback from the clubs has been positive with the members and service delivery expected to benefit from our programs.

The Newman government is introducing amendments to the Racing Act 2002 to create a new racing structure. This will see the creation of three separate control boards for each code of racing, namely, thoroughbred, harness and greyhound racing, as well as the over-arching All Codes Racing Industry Board. Additionally, we also announced three new country racing programs: the Showcase Country Series, Celebrate Country Series and Sustain Country Series. It is part of the Newman government's commitment to delivering an extra \$4 million over four years to help rebuild country racing. Several races have already taken place with great success, with the Kilcoy and Tambo races held over the Queen's Birthday long weekend. This industry is the livelihood of up to 30,000 people across Queensland and provides tourism and social opportunities to residents across 130 community based clubs across our great state. Additionally, we will amend the Racing Act 2002 to establish a new racing industry structure fund of \$2.5 million for 2012-13 and a further \$2.5 million for 2013-14 being provided for the Queensland Thoroughbred Investment Scheme to further support the Queensland thoroughbred industry.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service management responsibilities include public estate of approximately 12½ million hectares of land, including national parks and state forest tenure, as well as reserves, trusteeships and freehold land. They are directly responsible for managing state marine parks with a total area of approximately 72,000 square kilometres and have primary responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, some 345,000 square kilometres. Our marine parks, terrestrial parks and forests hosted around 58 million visits last year and over one million camper nights were spent in QPWS park camp grounds. Increasing access and improving park management is vital to ensuring that those visitors continue to return. Accordingly, we launched a new online booking system for camping and vehicle permits, ParksQ. We have also begun our quest to cut permit classes by up to 50 per cent. Our \$1.5 million over three years Friends of Parks scheme, which is already under way, is another way access is being increased. Parks staff maintain \$1 billion worth of infrastructure and assets, including camping areas and roads. In 2012-13, \$13.9 million will be provided to capital works to replace and build visitor and management infrastructure in protected areas and forests. Fire management is one of our most important priorities. Accordingly, in the current financial year \$7 million will be invested in fire management activities. This includes an investment of \$1.5 million under the enhanced Fire Management Program.

In delivering these services, I am reaching our government's objective for the community and commitments by contributing to the growth of our four-pillar economy through reducing red tape and regulation, sustaining tourism, lowering the cost of living for families through Get in the Game initiatives, delivering better infrastructure and better planning by supporting new racing infrastructure, revitalising front-line services for families, streamlining the processes for camping and vehicle access into our national parks, and restoring accountability in governments through implementing a range of government and planning across codes of racing. The Newman government is acting now to address the problems caused by the former Labor government's financial mismanagement, to get Queensland back on track. Mr Chairman, I thank you for your time.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I now call on the member for Mackay.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, welcome to the estimates. No doubt you think you have the dream portfolio of sports, recreation and national parks. Since you have been minister, how many invites have you had to corporate boxes, how many did you accept and who was in attendance?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank you very much for the question, because it is an extremely important question that I am asked this morning. Very clearly, I represent 8,000 different sporting bodies throughout the state of Queensland. We will not get into the national parks and racing. We will save that for a little later. I get invited along to numerous sporting events, as does my deputy, Mr Tim Mander. We would love to go to every single function that we are invited to, but we are absolutely incapable of doing so because there is only two of us. I make no apology for going along. I have been to the Reds match, I have been to the State of Origin and I have been to numerous soccer games throughout the state of Queensland and I have visited numerous sporting groups. Just a couple of weeks ago, I went to the Wanderers Football Club in my electorate and it was wonderful to be there.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, I know that you go to sporting events, but the question relates to corporate boxes in stadiums and not your local sport and rec, which most members probably attend. At the moment, I am at cricket all weekend and I attend hockey during the winter months. Minister, the specific question is: how many invites have you received, how many have you accepted, who invited you and who was in attendance at the corporate boxes that you attended?

**Mr DICKSON:** Mr Chairman, just for clarification, is this a supplementary question or do I get time to finish the first one?

**CHAIR:** I thought you were midway through answering the question. I will let you continue answering it—

**Mr DICKSON:** I do not know if this is going to be part of the process, that people butt in and do not give you time to answer questions. If they want to ask questions, I am very pleased to answer them in depth and in detail.

**CHAIR:** I think he was just reinforcing that he wanted the corporate box answer. I take on board your comments. Please finish your original answer.

**Mr DICKSON:** Thank you, Mr Chairman, that is greatly appreciated. I have been invited to numerous sporting events and to boxes, but none in government boxes. We made it extremely clear when we were elected to government—

**Mr MULHERIN:** I know that, Minister.

**Mr DICKSON:** If you bear with me. If you ask a question, I am very happy to answer it, if you have the time for me to do so. I have been invited to numerous events, but when the Newman government first got into power we immediately abolished the free rides and the free kicks that Labor continued to abuse the use of, for the people of Queensland. A question that I would like to throw back to you is the one I have asked the Leader of the Opposition, Annastacia Palaszczuk. This morning I wrote to her,

asking her exactly how many ministers had given away tickets to their Labor mates they have taken along at the taxpayers' cost and not stopped sucking blood out of every single Queensland over numerous years? That is the question that I throw back at you today. We cancelled the boxes, we cancelled the free rides. We stopped that sort of behaviour from going on. The question I throw back at you, my friend, is when will you be open and transparent and let the Queensland people know how much money you sucked out of them?

**CHAIR:** Minister, you will refer to the member by his title, the member for Mackay.

**Mr DICKSON:** The member for Mackay, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition; forgive me, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Obviously, the process works a little better the other way. I am sure that the minister and the deputy opposition leader will take that question on notice. I look forward to the answer in the fullness of time.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Mr Chairman, I take it that the minister is refusing to answer the question: how many invites have you had to corporate boxes, who invited you and who was in attendance? Are you going to provide that on notice?

**Mr DICKSON:** Very clearly, this is not a budget related matter. I have answered the member's question—

**Mr MULHERIN:** It relates to Stadium Queensland—

**Mr DICKSON:** Excuse me, if you would like me to answer the question, I am very pleased to do so. I have answered the question honestly and transparently. I have been invited along to numerous events; I cannot physically get to them all. We do not have free boxes under the Queensland government structure any longer, unlike the Labor government which continued to use taxpayers' money any time they felt free to do so.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, the question is about corporate largess to ministers.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, the question was not budget related. I agree with the minister. It is external people doing the inviting. It is not about the budget process.

**Mr MULHERIN:** With all due respect, it is in relation—

**CHAIR:** The question was asked and answered. Do you have a further question?

**Mr MULHERIN:** Yes. Minister, what are you trying to hide? Why are you secretive about declaring what corporate boxes you have attended as part of corporate largess?

**Mr DICKSON:** To the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I am declaring everything. We are open and transparent—

**Mr MULHERIN:** Why don't you declare the invites that you received, who attended and which ones you attended?

**Mr DICKSON:** Mr Chairman, Again I will make the point extremely clear, because I do not think the member is listening whatsoever.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I am listening. You are trying to hide the information.

**Mr DICKSON:** You are being rude again and butting in. If you would like me to answer the question, I am very pleased to do so.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, your question has been answered and the minister answers the question as he sees fit. Do you have a further question?

**Mr MULHERIN:** Yes, Chair. Will the minister confirm that the LNP government will not reintroduce corporate boxes during this term or any future term of LNP governments?

**Mr DICKSON:** I point out very clearly that the Premier made a very pertinent statement when we first came to government that we were going to cancel all publicly funded corporate boxes and seats of any kind. We do not utilise those.

**Mr MULHERIN:** For the whole term?

**Mr DICKSON:** I do not know whether you are going to continue to do this all day, but I will leave that up to the chairman's discretion. He is running the show today. I hope that it is open, transparent and fair. I am happy to answer the question if you would let me do so.

We abolished the use of corporate boxes, free rides, free tickets for all members of government. That is not happening any longer. If cabinet decides to make an alternative decision it can do that. At this point in time, we are following the policy put forward by cabinet. The ministers and members of the LNP government can proudly put their hands on their heart when it comes to this—unlike those in the former Labor government who continued to use taxpayers' funds to give all their mates a free ride. We do not know how many tickets were given and whether they paid FBT.

**Mr MULHERIN:** So you will not confirm—

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, you have been over this ground and over this ground. I am now going to throw to the member for Bulimba for a question.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Further to the previous questions, in reference to the Service Delivery Statement and the administered grant provided annually to Stadiums Queensland, can the minister please detail the government's position regarding government owned corporate boxes at Suncorp Stadium and other venues? Could the minister please outline to the committee whether the government receives an allocation of free tickets to events? Does this differ from past practices?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member very much for the question. The Newman government has a clear objective to cut the waste of the former Labor government and turn the dire state of Queensland's finances around. Unbelievably, despite the massive budget black hole the former Labor government was digging for our state, they were the proud owners of not one but two corporate boxes at Suncorp Stadium, which included a 40-seat box for government ministerial use. They also owned a corporate box at the Gabba and had the use of boxes at Skilled Park, Metricon Stadium and Dairy Farmers Stadium.

The Newman government cut this waste at the first opportunity upon entering government. This waste included hospitality at Suncorp Stadium, the Brisbane Entertainment Centre, Metricon Stadium, Skilled Park, Dairy Farmers Stadium, the Gabba, the Queensland Sports and Athletics Centre and the Queensland Tennis Centre. It also included the practice of being given privately allocated tickets to Stadiums Queensland events. This was typical of what we came to expect from the former Labor government—endless waste, mismanagement, perks for mates, poor financial decisions. This left the state of Queensland \$65 billion in debt.

My message is that the LNP is doing everything we can to spend taxpayers' money wisely, unlike the former Labor government that enjoyed tens of thousands of dollars worth of free entertainment while driving the Queensland economy into the ground. My message to Queenslanders is: we will do everything we can to spend your money wisely.

I wrote to the opposition leader this morning in reference to approximately 600 complementary general tickets provided to the former government for major sporting events held at Stadiums Queensland facilities, including Suncorp Stadium, the Gabba, Dairy Farmers Stadium, Metricon Stadium, Skilled Park during the period of January 2011 to March 2012. In addition to the abovementioned 600 general admission tickets, my correspondence also relates to the use of corporate boxes retained by the former government for events and facilities as outlined in a table. They are: Suncorp Stadium, one by 42 seats, one by 12 seats; the Gabba, one by 18 seats; Skilled Park, one by 18 seats; Metricon Stadium, one by 18 seats; the Queensland Tennis Centre, one by 12 seats; Dairy Farmers Stadium, eight by corporate lounge tickets.

As reported in today's media and as my subsequent inquiries to Stadiums Queensland have confirmed, there appears that there has been very little transparency around how the 600 general admissions tickets were dealt with and how many thousands of corporate box tickets were distributed. It is in this context that I write to the opposition leader without prejudice to seek her cooperation to help the government further investigate how these tickets, including the thousands of unaccounted for corporate box tickets were handled. Given that there seems to be nonexistent records around how these tickets were used and who they were given to, there may be far-reaching fringe benefits tax issues for the government to deal with, particularly with regard to the fringe benefit tax for providing government employees with free tickets.

I note that the comments attributed to the opposition in today's *Courier-Mail* indicate that some of the 600 tickets were provided to charity and other community groups. As I have no reason to believe that the opposition would deliberately set out to mislead the media, the comments stand to reason that the opposition may have in its possession or at the very least knowledge of or recordings relating to how these tickets were distributed and to whom. I would make the observation that if the Labor Party has nothing to hide in relation to this matter then it should commit to full cooperation with any investigation into this matter as well as hand over any records it retains relating to the distribution of complimentary tickets.

**CHAIR:** The time for consideration of the portfolio of Recreation and Sport has expired. We will now move to the examination of estimates for the portfolio of Racing. I would invite committee members to commence questioning on the Racing portfolio.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I refer to page 10 of the SDS where it talks about the role of government in relation to matters impacting on the probity and integrity of racing. I refer to the government's direction issued to Racing Queensland immediately after the election which requires 'government approval to be obtained prior to Racing Queensland employing, engaging or terminating staff'. Is this direction still in force, yes or no? This is across the Racing portfolio. It is a direction that you put out.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay—

**Mr MULHERIN:** I am trying to assist the minister—

**CHAIR:** You are not assisting anyone.

**Mr DICKSON:** Racing Queensland was an absolute mess when the LNP government was elected. We made a very clear commitment leading into the election that we would reinvigorate racing and would clean out the dead wood. I understand that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who used to be the minister for racing in Queensland, washed his hands of the matter like Pontius Pilate and decided that he would pass over the responsibility for racing to Mr Bob Bentley and Mr Bill Ludwig who were very clearly not running the industry very well.

Since coming to government we have made some extremely tough decisions and some of those decisions have been delivering goods for the people of Queensland. I talked in my introductory statement about what we are doing for racing in Queensland and what we are doing for country racing in the state of Queensland. We have put \$1 million a year into country racing, which is putting \$50,000 into 20 different races across this great state.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Point of relevance, Minister.

**Mr DICKSON:** I am getting to the answer if the member will allow me to do so.

**CHAIR:** The member for Mackay, will you stop interjecting while the minister is answering. I would like to hear the answer. You have asked a question and I would like to hear the answer.

**Mr DICKSON:** We have limited the expenditure on Queensland Racing. We are going through a process right now—and I will lead on to something the member may wish to ask about at a later date and I will give him a free kick—as far as infrastructure spending is concerned. We have put aside \$110 million. That was our commitment to delivering racing in Queensland. That infrastructure program is being revisited at the moment to make sure that we get extremely good value for the money.

As the Minister for Sport and Racing I take this very seriously, unlike the previous minister who really washed his hands of the subject and gave the responsibility to a few Labor mates. What I would really like to touch upon is the Auditor-General's report. The interesting part of racing in Queensland is how four Labor mates were paid \$1.85 million, giving themselves a 30 per cent pay increase, and the former minister sat back with his hands over his eyes. I know what the former minister must have been doing while that happened. I would say he was sitting in one of those corporate boxes watching a game of football or State of Origin. That must have been what happened because he did not have time to take responsibility for racing and allowed it to get into the situation that it is in today. The answer very clearly is, yes.

**Mr MULHERIN:** So the direction is still in force?

**Mr DICKSON:** It is in place as far as the finances are concerned.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, I am now going to move to a government member for a question. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I refer to the SDS again and the fact that Racing Queensland Ltd is charged with spending taxpayers' money on developing racing infrastructure in this state. Would the minister please detail for the committee issues surrounding the ability of the previous Racing Queensland board to effectively manage taxpayers' money in the past?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member very much for the question. I know that all LNP members are very keen to make sure that racing is successful in the state of Queensland once again. We are united. We want to deliver good value for money in this great state of Queensland.

The member is correct when he states that RQL is charged with spending millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. The objective view of the racing industry is that the former RQL board did not do a very good job at all. I think that is a massive understatement. For example, whilst I proudly represent the Sunshine Coast, the tens of millions of dollars that have been spent at the Caloundra Turf Club have been nothing short of a financial disaster. Likewise, their decision to put the synthetic turf in at Toowoomba has brought the industry to its knees in that part of the world.

Today I am asked about the issues surrounding the previous RQL board and its ability to effectively manage financial matters. The observation I would make is that a recently released Auditor-General's report on the separation payments made to four top Racing Queensland Ltd executives again is the clearest demonstration that the previous RQL board that carried on with a nod and a wink from the former government were a disaster for the industry.

From my initial reading of the Auditor-General's report serious questions were raised about the conduct of the former RQL board, which included Labor hand-picked racing tsar Bob Bentley and AWU boss Bill Ludwig. What the report told us is that in August 2011 the former board of RQL agreed to alter the employment contracts of four RQL top executives, including the addition of a material adverse changes clause—that is the key component—and a 30 per cent salary increase. On 26 March 2012, just two days after the state election, all four executives resigned as employees of RQL, receiving separation payments totalling \$1.858 million, including 14 months salary, redundancy payments and their statutory leave entitlements. The Auditor-General found little evidence in the RQL minutes that the responsibility of the directors under the Corporations Act 2001 were actively considered by the board members, particularly the requirements to act in good faith and in the best interests of members of the

company. My understanding is that the issues raised by the Auditor-General are now the subject of an ASIC inquiry. There can be no doubt that the RQL board put in place extraordinarily favourable employment arrangements that delivered these executives the sweetheart deal of the century—a collective payout of \$1.85 million upon their voluntary resignation.

The matters outlined are just one example of issues surrounding the ability of the former board to deal with taxpayers' money. These are the matters the former government unfortunately chose to close its eyes to and look the other way. When it comes to racing, at best the former minister and the former government were incompetent and at worst they were complicit to these murky deals.

**Mr DAVIES:** I refer to the Racing Industry Capital Development Scheme. Could you please provide an update on the government's plan for raising infrastructure development in Queensland?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank you very much for the question. I am going to keep repeating this. I know every single LNP member is 100 per cent behind the racing industry in this great state. This government has made a commitment to make available \$110 million for racing industry infrastructure upgrades under the Racing Industry Capital Development Scheme. The industry infrastructure plan originally developed by Racing Queensland saw commitments made to a large number of capital projects across Queensland. While it is clear that racing industry infrastructure requires money to be spent on it to bring it up to an appropriate standard, the government was not convinced that the money was being spent in such a way to bring the best benefits to the industry. Therefore, Racing Queensland was asked to review the plan and report back with its priorities for funding from the Racing Industry Capital Development Scheme. The plan is to be funded by the government by redirecting 50 per cent of the wagering tax into the Racing Industry Capital Development Scheme over five years, up until 2015. This government has also committed that clubs will not be required to provide an equity interest in their racetracks to access this particular amount of funding.

I also wish to make it clear that the government intends to honour its election commitment and deliver the redevelopment of the Gold Coast Turf Club. The Gold Coast Turf Club is an integral part of both the Queensland racing industry and our tourism industry and is also one of the largest training centres in Australia. The redevelopment will be undertaken in stages as the club must remain operational for major racing events such as the Magic Millions and also the Winter Racing Carnival.

The Mackay Turf Club recently saw its extensive redevelopment completed. I note for the benefit of this committee that this project was prioritised for development by the former government. I note that the racing club is just outside the former minister's electorate. In addition to providing the \$110 million, this government has committed to establishing an overarching all codes racing industry board as well as three separate control boards to represent the thoroughbred, harness and greyhound industry. In Queensland all codes of racing industry boards will be responsible for addressing strategic cross-industry issues such as industry funds allocation. I look forward to working closely with the new board and to getting racing in Queensland back on track.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Mackay.

**Mr MULHERIN:** My question is to the director-general. Director-General, the minister has confirmed that the direction that Racing Queensland requires prior approval for employing, engaging and terminating staff is still in force. I refer to the appointment by Racing Queensland of Mr Allan Reardon as Director of Steward Development which has been widely reported. Did Racing Queensland seek and obtain government approval prior to this appointment being made?

**Dr Glaister:** I would like to direct that question to Mike Kelly, the Executive Director of the Office of Racing.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Do you want the question repeated, Mr Kelly?

**Mr Kelly:** If you would please.

**Mr MULHERIN:** The minister has confirmed that all appointments to Racing Queensland have to be approved by government prior to appointment. I refer to the appointment of Racing Queensland Ltd of Mr Allan Reardon as the Director of Steward Development which has been widely reported. Did Racing Queensland seek and obtain government approval to this appointment being made?

**Mr Kelly:** Racing Queensland has sought the approval for the employment of a range of staff. Those approvals have processed through the departmental approval process. As far as the specifics of a person, Mr Reardon, is concerned, Minister, I believe we would probably have to check the records for that to get the details of exactly what has been requested and what has not.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Director-General, I take it that as Mr Kelly cannot provide a direct answer the answer is probably yes, that they have not received approval.

**Dr Glaister:** Thank you for the question. I would prefer to take that on notice and I will try to get that back to you by the end of the day and if not within the two days.

**CHAIR:** Under standing orders, you cannot actually take the question on notice. The minister can.

**Mr DICKSON:** Mr Chairman, I will repeat what the director-general has just said. We are prepared to take that question on notice and we will get that back to you hopefully before this session finishes or within the next 48 hours.

**Mr MULHERIN:** There are a couple of supplementary questions that I would like to pursue.

**CHAIR:** Would you like to place those supplementary questions on the table now?

**Mr MULHERIN:** No. I imagine that it would not take long to obtain that information.

**CHAIR:** We have another five minutes allocated to the portfolio of racing but if there is time later—

**Mr MULHERIN:** I take it that the department would not take much time to confirm or deny Mr Reardon's appointment.

**CHAIR:** I think the minister has indicated that he will take the question on notice and he has given himself a time frame of 24 to 48 hours to respond to you.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Or before the end of this hearing.

**Mr DICKSON:** If that information is able to be obtained.

**CHAIR:** I accept that. Did you have a further question, member for Mackay?

**Mr MULHERIN:** Yes. I refer to page 9 of the SDS where it talks about rejuvenating the racing industry. Minister, I refer to the product and program agreement between the Queensland racing industry and TattsBet that provides the majority of revenue the industry received and allows it to operate. Minister, how much revenue did the agreement deliver to the industry last financial year? You should know this off the top of your head without having to refer to notes.

**Mr DICKSON:** Through you, Mr Chairman—

**Mr MULHERIN:** If this agreement was not—another question you might want to get advice on.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, is there any chance you are even going to let the minister have a go at answering the first question, because I would like to hear the answer?

**Mr DICKSON:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank you very much. I am happy to take another question after this one if time allows that. TattsBet is a vital contributor to the Queensland racing industry and, with the Premier's recent announcement of its head office moving to Queensland, it is also a major contributor to the Queensland economy.

When the Queensland TAB was privatised in 1999, it purchased a 99-year lease to conduct off-course wagering in Queensland with the initial 15 years exclusive. TattsBet is also a party to the 15-year commercial agreement with the Queensland racing industry for the supply of racing product. The exclusive TattsBet off-course wagering licence ends on 30 June 2014, as does its agreement with the Queensland racing industry. The primary responsibility of establishing this new wagering agreement lies with the Hon. Jarrod Bleijie, the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, as I am sure the member knows all about. My department will have input into these arrangements, as will the Hon. Tim Nicholls MP, Minister for Trade, due to wagering tax implications.

Very clearly this is an extremely important issue. We through my department are working on it right now to make sure we get the best possible outcome for racing in the state of Queensland so we can deliver what has been lacking for such a long, long time. As I stated earlier, under the previous government they let racing go to hell in a handbasket. Nobody in the industry was happy with where it was going. I can tell you one thing that I am extremely grateful to Mr Bob Bentley, Mr Bill Ludwig and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for. They actually united the whole racing industry because the whole racing industry hated them so bad. They have come together. They want us to deliver.

**Mr MULHERIN:** That's not what I heard about what they are saying about Dickson.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay.

**Mr DICKSON:** The direct answer to your question is \$128.42 million. I thank you for your question.

**Mr MULHERIN:** If the agreement was not in place—

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, please I am chairing. I now take a question from the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** My question is to the minister. Minister, on page 56 of Budget Paper No. 4 you refer to \$4 million across the forward estimates for rejuvenating country racing in Queensland which should facilitate up to 80 race meetings. Can you please amplify what that initiative will do for Queensland racing?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member for the question. I am going to continue to emphasise that every single member of the LNP wants racing to be successful, remembering that 30,000 people in this great state of Queensland are employed directly and indirectly in such an important industry, remembering that these are breadwinners who take home money from this industry to feed their family.

The LNP government was elected with a clear mandate to rejuvenate country racing in the great state of Queensland. One of our key election commitments was to deliver an additional \$4 million over four years to provide an extra 80 country race meetings in that time frame. I am pleased to inform the House that we are delivering on that component of our commitment. I recently announced the establishment of three new country racing programs—Showcase Country Series, Celebrate Country Series and Sustain Country Series, which began on 1 September. To date, extra race meetings have been scheduled for Kilcoy, Roma, Innisfail, Beaudesert, Goondiwindi, Bell, Tambo, Esk, Mareeba, Herbert River, Alpha—you did not see that one coming because not many people did—and Gladstone.

This initiative will provide a much needed boost to country racing and allow clubs to attract stronger race fields and entice more patrons to the track. We know that prize money is the lifeblood of the industry which is why the Showcase Country Series and the Celebrate Country Series will have their feature races with prize money of up to \$20,000 and \$10,000 respectively. The third program, the Sustain Country Series, will be more flexible in nature and was strategically allocated to support and sustain country communities with their particular focus on allowing racing to support its community. This could include charity race days, special race days to mark a community achievement or a milestone or extra race days for when weather events have previously heavily impacted on that region's racing calendar.

I would make the observation to the committee that our plan stands in stark contrast to how the previous minister administered the racing portfolio. The former minister, the member for Mackay, who did such a good job of destroying racing in this state that his colleagues appointed him to be the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, was complicit in the approach of the former board of RQL, which rather than working with racing clubs sought to swap funding for equity. Whilst the Racing Queensland executives lined their pockets and were exposed by the Auditor-General and clubs have bled, the only hand up was a scheme designed to strip them of all their assets. We will never let that happen. Whereas the former government was committed to empire building, we are committed to ensuring that country racing clubs again become the rallying point for their local communities and an opportunity for families to come together, towns to come together, communities to come together, because racing is the lifeblood of 30,000 families in this state and it was a sorry day when Labor took control of it.

**CHAIR:** I thank the minister for the answer. The time allocated for the examination of the appropriation for racing has now expired. I invite questions from non-government members on the examination of the appropriation for national parks. I call the member for Rockhampton.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, I refer to a question on notice asked in the parliament on 7 June this year by the member for Mackay, who asked for direct information on cuts to front-line services within your portfolio. Your response to that question was—

We on this side of parliament are here to make sure front-line services continue to be delivered for the people of Queensland, and that is what we will continue to do.

You went on to say—

Every front-line service under national parks will be looked after.

I seek leave to table the *Hansard* record of that.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Mr BYRNE:** The *Courier-Mail* has reported that temporary staff would be axed despite your vow to protect the front line, including such positions as senior project officer for tourism and visitor management unit and operations manager for the Great Barrier Reef Field Management Program. Minister, how was this protecting the front line?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member very much for the question because this is a very, very important question and it drills down to the heart of the problem of Queensland's finances. The part the Labor member seems to overlook is the debt in the vicinity of \$65 billion. This did not just happen by accident. It was brought on by a government who had no idea of how to expend money and no idea of how to fulfil the commitments to their employment contracts. I could never understand why all these casual contracts were put into place. When the previous Labor Premier of Queensland went out and said, 'We're going to create 100,000 jobs,' I did not realise the majority of those would be employed by the state government on temporary contracts.

That article that you spoke about was about temporary contracts. The problem that we face today is—and I have made it extremely clear—we have gone through a process of where we have had to cut back because the current government realises that you cannot run a business at a loss. You cannot borrow money to pay wages. You cannot continue to spend without some sort of a business plan or an understanding of where that money is going to go and what is value for money. Very clearly we have protected all front-line services. I say that again and again and again. One day people will start to understand and realise that we do have park rangers out there still looking after front-line services—roughly 700 full-time, front-line service rangers looking after our parks and our forests. They fight fires. They give the public direction when they get lost in our national parks. That is what they do on a day-to-day basis.

I am sorry that the opposition does not realise the impact and the gravity of the situation that they dropped the Queensland taxpayers in. I know they had a pretty good time when all this was happening, sitting back in the boxes at Suncorp Stadium, watching the Reds and watching the football matches and having a good old time at the taxpayers' expense. They let this state fall into disrepair. They let this state go down the tube. We will never allow that to happen under our watch. We are making the tough decisions and we have no choice. We have to make sure that Queensland is a prosperous state once again and we are protecting our front-line service operatives.

**CHAIR:** I have a follow-up question from the member for Barron River.

**Mr TROUT:** My question is to the director-general. Could you please clarify to the committee the basis for the comments and observations made by a departmental officer in the *Courier-Mail* yesterday?

**Dr Glaister:** Thank you for the question. The *Courier-Mail* article talked about decisions that I had made not to extend temporary contracts. The majority of the decisions described in the article were made two to three months after the machinery of government changes that established the new department. What the committee needs to understand is that when this happens, whether it is following an election or because of a restructure, when you bring disparate parts of other government departments together then there is a restructure or a recalibration. As the accountable officer—even though I am acting as the accountable officer—it is my job to make the call on where resources should go.

At the time there were many changes occurring to the final make-up of the department and its functions, because with machinery of government changes you bring people in. They may be in a whole range of different roles, and some of those suit and some don't. Again, as the accountable officer I have to make the call. The structure of the department needed to be amended and a final budget was still to be confirmed. As I said, it was my call. That is what I get paid for as the chief executive. Unlike junior officers in the department, I guess I am uniquely placed to make the call in that I have to wear the consequences.

The comments contained in the article were the observations of line managers, of individuals. Naturally if they are asked: 'Is this position essential?' they are going to say 'yes' and that is fine. But as the accountable officer, as the person responsible, I have to make the decision across the whole department, and the people who have made those comments in the proformas that came up did not have the same level of understanding as I would have in looking at the totality of the department.

Have front-line positions been cut? In making the decisions I did around these temporary positions, the information provided in the employee requiring placement form was only one of the considerations. I needed to look at the whole department and decide if it was essential at that point in time or not based on a whole range of other considerations. The recommendation of the line manager about positions being front line was one consideration. However, this was not consistent across the organisation. They were only looking at their own patch. This was further considered by the Public Service Commission and the review that it undertook of front-line positions. My priority was to place employees requiring placement as opposed to increasing the number of temporary staff.

**CHAIR:** To be totally clear, your department did seek to protect front-line jobs and services?

**Dr Glaister:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, in light of what the director-general has just said, which I would assume means that all those positions listed in the *Courier-Mail* were in fact axed, given that you were specifically warned that abolishing these positions would have adverse effects on front-line service delivery, have you misled the parliament and misled the people of Queensland by very clearly saying that front-line positions would be protected and then clearly axing those front-line positions against the direct advice, as the DG said, of your own front-line line management?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member for the question. I think the director-general has articulated an extremely accurate answer and I have no problem with the answer that he has put forward. Those temporary staff were exactly what I spoke about earlier when I commented about the ex-Premier of Queensland creating temporary jobs. We were unable to afford these positions. They were not full-time positions. We have protected all of our front-line staff, making sure that our rangers are still out there every single day. I refer back to the article that you keep touching upon, which was that our rangers will now have to deal with the public. Yes, they do. I want them to. Every single day of the week I want them to be talking to the community, showing visitors around our national park and getting an understanding of what the public really wants. The more those rangers are communicating with the public, the more I know we are making it a success. This government went to the election committing to opening up our national parks to ecotourism, committing to getting good value for money so that all our national parks are enhanced and looked after in the future. You may not be aware of this, but under the previous Labor government there were only management plans for some 17 per cent of our national parks—

**Mr BYRNE:** We'll get to that.

**Mr DICKSON:**—and that greatly concerned me. Our department now has many plans in place to look after our national parks, and we will be making sure we become one of the greenest governments this country has ever seen—unlike the previous Labor government, which went out of its way to jump into bed with the Greens so they could do preference deals to try to stay in government. Nothing was more important than the Labor Party staying in government and doing deals with anybody to stay in power so they could go to Suncorp Stadium and watch football matches.

**CHAIR:** I remind the minister that we are wandering away from the detail of the budget.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, I am very pleased to hear you talking about the 17 per cent, because on 7 June you said, 'You'—meaning Labor at the time, which you have just repeated now—'would be aware that management plans covered only 17 per cent of national parks.' That was on 7 June. Subsequently, on page 4 of the SDS under the department's achievements as at 30 June this year—a mere 23 days after you made that statement in the parliament and you repeated it here again—95 per cent of national parks have management plans or their equivalent. Minister, which number is correct? Have you again misled the parliament? Were you asleep at the wheel? What happened and where were you?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member for the question. I was not asleep at the wheel. Under the previous Labor government it had management plans for 17 per cent of our protected areas. We now have 95 per cent covered by management plans—

**Mr BYRNE:** In 23 days?

**Mr DICKSON:** It just shows how effective and efficient we are, doesn't it? I am sorry that your side of politics could not keep up with the game. That is why the people of Queensland went out of their way in March, and I can work the numbers there, too. The numbers are very clear: 78 to 7. I know what those numbers are and they changed in March as well.

**Mr BYRNE:** Director-General, you have heard the minister's statements on these matters and the point we have tried to make. My question has two parts. What was the status of plans in June this year when the minister made his statements about 17 per cent? And how many plans were completed at the transition of government on 25 March?

**Dr Glaister:** Thank you for the question. In terms of national parks, as at 2010, 23 per cent of national parks had management plans in place.

**Mr BYRNE:** Yes, I am aware of the audit report.

**CHAIR:** You are not helping.

**Dr Glaister:** All protected areas were 17 per cent. The current statistics for 2012 is that for national parks 252 of the 322 national parks, or 78 per cent, have been approved. There is 10 out of 332, or three per cent, that have been commenced, and there is 18.6 per cent that have not commenced. If you look at the totality of the protected areas of the state which includes national parks, 57 per cent are approved, 7.6 per cent are commenced and 35 per cent are not commenced. If you look at the total of management plans or management statements, and the difference is a management plan is quite a comprehensive document—

**Mr BYRNE:** Mr Chair, I asked a specific question. The minister has been saying 17 per cent. The legacy would be known on 24 March. I want the director-general to tell me what the status of management plans was on 24 March to correct the record as far as Labor's legacy. Can you do that?

**Dr Glaister:** Is that directed to me?

**CHAIR:** I am not entirely sure.

**Mr BYRNE:** To the DG, yes. I want you to correct the record and to indicate precisely what Labor's legacy was in terms of the development of these plans.

**Dr Glaister:** To answer the question again, 17 per cent of all protected areas were protected.

**Mr BYRNE:** That is two years old. That is 2010.

**CHAIR:** Member for Rockhampton!

**Dr Glaister:** 2012, I have said 17—

**Mr MULHERIN:** What is it at 24 March 2012?

**CHAIR:** Member for Rockhampton and member for Mackay, the acting director-general is answering the question. Your badgering is not helping. I will not put up with it.

**Dr Glaister:** Of the 320 national parks, 98 per cent are now covered by either a management plan or a statement.

**Mr BYRNE:** That does not answer the question.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** My question is for the minister and probably to draw lines on more budgetary matters. Can the minister please outline in the 2012-13 National Parks and Wildlife Service's capital budget how that will contribute to growing a four-pillar economic in Queensland?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member for the question. Just like racing and sport, I know every member of the LNP government is 100 per cent behind opening up our national parks to ecotourism and making sure that we get effective and efficient delivery for all money that is spent in the great state of Queensland. Our national parks and forests are a great place to visit, as well as being a major tourist asset, and are places that all Queenslanders should be proud of.

As members of the committee will know, tourism is one of the four pillars of the Queensland economy. By investing in our national parks as tourism assets and facilitating access, the QPWS's Capital Works Program will contribute to the growth of our four-pillar economy. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's Capital Works Program provides infrastructure that is critical to the enjoyment and management of over 12 million hectares of national parks and forests. This government is committed to improving visitor access to facilities for more than 58 million people who visit our national parks and forests every year. That is something we should be extremely proud of.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service's Capital Works Program in the 2012-13 year will see approximately \$13.9 million being spent on visitor information projects and management of infrastructure including some exciting projects that will enhance visitor access to our parks. For example, in the member for Townsville's electorate as part of a \$138,000 cooperative project with the local mountain bike club we will have constructed a purpose-built cross-country mountain bike trail for visitors to the Cape Pallarenda Conservation Park and the northern section of the Townsville Town Common which was officially opened by the member for Townsville only last weekend. I had a long conversation with the member for Townsville about that, and I have seen the video and I could tell you were very excited, but you should have ridden the bike and not put me in for it—and I am looking forward to doing that in the future.

In regard to supporting our four-pillar economy, it is also worthwhile noting that in most cases national parks are located in regional areas. This means that construction activities to support the capital infrastructure developments are, by and large, carried out by local engaged contractors which is helping your local economy. The positive impact is that it obviously represents the investment of local businesses and, by virtue of that, local communities benefit.

I am proud that our comprehensive Capital Works Program will not only enhance the visitor experience in our national parks and forests but also improve the management and ensure the safety of both visitors and Queensland Parks and Wildlife staff in our state. I thank you so much for the question, because a lot of people in this room may not be aware that mountain bike riding is becoming a phenomena throughout the world. I am really excited about it because I say to the world if anybody is watching out there, 'Come to Queensland. Enjoy our national parks. Go to Townsville and ride this track. You are going to have a great time.'

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to the minister. In reference to page 56 of Budget Paper No. 4, would the minister please outline to the committee his department's approach to fire management?

**Mr DICKSON:** Again to members on that side of the fence, this being one of our worst fire seasons ever, this is a very important question. My department is well placed to meet its environmental and community protection obligations in managing fire on its national parks and state forests. The QPWS is only responsible for fire occurring in its estates. However, in ensuring a whole-of-government approach to managing fire across our rural landscapes, the department works closely with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and other lands management agencies and local authorities.

There are approximately 600 fire trained staff to implement QPWS fire management programs. The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has a good track record in its planned use of fire hazard reduction and managing biodiversity. Over the last three fire years, some 1,100 planned burns have been conducted over an area of approximately 2.4 million hectares. This fire year to date—from 1 March to 30 September—the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service have carried out more than 395 planned burns over an area of some 0.72 million hectares of land.

A 'fire year' is a period that enables a planned burning season and the following wildfire season to be recorded in one 12-month period and is the preferred method of reporting fire activities. A calendar year split with the wildfire season is generally September to January, whereas a financial year split with planned burning, undertaken as a bulk planned burn, is generally April to August.

Fire management of over 12 million hectares of parks and forests is governed by the fire management system and a series of fire specific policies and procedures which guide planning, preparation and operational activities. In the 2012-13 financial year, \$7 million will be invested in fire management activities. This includes an investment of \$1.5 million under the enhanced fire management program. The \$1.5 million enhanced fire management funding will be directed at building resilience of critical ecosystems through fire management on parks and forests including investing of:

around \$0.8 million in enhancing on-ground planned burning activities across the state to a major regional aerial burn projects; \$250,000 on bioregional planned burn guidelines; \$350,000 on fire training; and \$100,000 on GIS mapping products that support fire management.

From the base funding of \$5.5 million, \$0.6 million will be directed towards the annual priority fire management program for additional key planned burning and strategic fire line initiatives. Approximately \$4.9 million will be spent on more routine projects to reduce fire hazards and manage biodiversity including: maintaining an extensive network of fire control lines to aid wildfire mitigation and planned burns; maintaining a well-equipped and skilled workforce; maintaining systems and databases to support fire management; reporting and responding to wildfires; and upgrading fire management capacities.

The effectiveness of the fire management system is measured through the implementation of planned burns, with a strategy of five per cent of the Queensland parks and wildlife managed estates in place in 2012-13. This performance measure is based on the financial year along with other departmental performance indicators, with the milestones for the first quarter being two per cent. The department is on track to achieving its annual five per cent target, with over 2.2 per cent achieved by 30 September this year.

The service's rolling planned burn program deliberately identifies more burns than will be implemented to provide the flexibility for regional staff to continually review and adapt to the priorities of their planned burns in consideration of a range of factors that influence risk management and the opportunities to implement burns. The annual performance measure of five per cent is not adjusted each year as the amount of planned burns undertaken in any year is variable. Planned burning is funded in a similar way and a similar amount to 2012-13 as in 2011-12.

In managing fire, the department places the highest priority on protecting human life, followed by protecting infrastructure and environmental values. The risk varies across the state. For example, small fires adjacent to populated areas along the coastal strip may be significant, whereas large fires in the cape are more common and much less of a risk to human life. Fire management is a complex matter and is affected by seasonal variations such as weather patterns, trends, localised vegetation growth, fuel loads, curing rates and weather conditions, fire programs by neighbouring landholders, recent wildfire histories and other factors, including fire danger rating, impact of the department's risk management plan and preparedness for activity.

My department is facing a potential active fire season this year, particularly through the inland grassland areas, due to the abundant fuel load, advanced curing and drying conditions. They are as well prepared as they can be for this fire season and they continue to monitor the fire danger and conditions to ensure a rapid response to any fire outbreaks in the state. I would like to commend every single ranger who is trained in fire safety. These men and women put their lives on the line every day for our people in this state. So get out there, do what you can, do not light fires in the wrong places because we do not want our people put at risk. But they are there and they are ready to do the job when called upon.

**Mr TROUT:** My question is to the minister. In reference to your service delivery statement, how will your efforts to cut red tape help the government meet its objectives of facilitating greater access to national parks?

**Mr DICKSON:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the member for the question. We went to the election and we wanted to make sure that all Queenslanders, all Australians and all people throughout the world had access to our national parks. My department has undertaken an initial review of the permits and identified that 34 existing types of permits related to the key Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service managed activities could be reduced to approximately 16 types of permits. That is a reduction of over 50 per cent of the permits. By untangling Labor's great web of permits, we will remove the excessive administrative burden that deterred so many Queenslanders from visiting our national parks. This is part of our ongoing commitment to facilitate greater access to our national parks.

Perhaps the most striking example of this is a group permit for school groups, scouts and other organisation activities. Under the former government, such groups had to fill out eight-page forms and wait up to 40 business days for their outings to be approved by the department. This simple policy change—and that is all it took—will mean that up to 400 recreational groups each year will no longer have to fill out up to 3,200 pages of paperwork just to visit a national park.

Another simple policy change will allow school groups and their tour operators to automatically receive camping fee concessions instead of previously having to submit a complicated four-page form and wait up to 40 business days for a letter from the department. With just two simple policy changes, all that is now required for a group to visit a national park and to receive their camping concessions is for them to make a booking. This will allow not just the existing 400 recreation groups who visit our national parks each year to gain access more simply but also the many groups who were previously deterred by Labor's web of permits. This is just one of the ways that we are cutting the red tape and facilitating greater access to our national parks.

I would like to make this public statement and call for people throughout the world to come here and visit our national parks because we want you to. We want to create the business. We want to fulfil the four pillars of our economy. We want tourism to be exciting. We have great facilities and great opportunities. United we will deliver a great outcome in our national parks. They will be much easier to visit. I look forward to our ecotourism policy which will be delivered very shortly.

**Mr TROUT:** My question is to the minister. In reference to your department's service delivery statement, specifically the ongoing operating costs, I refer to the Mamu canopy walk. What was the original project cost? Was there a feasibility study? What are the ongoing financial circumstances surrounding this piece of infrastructure in North Queensland?

**Mr DICKSON:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the member for the question because this question is all about accountability, financial viability and how somebody runs a state. There have been so many mistakes made in the past and we do not have the money to waste to make any more mistakes in the future. I can guarantee you that under an LNP government we will not be making the same mistakes that Labor made in the past.

Earlier this year, I revealed another bungled project undertaken by the previous Labor government, with figures showing that a \$10 million Bligh era tourist attraction was losing hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. The former Labor government spent \$10 million building the Mamu Rainforest Canopy Walkway in North Queensland 150 kilometres south of Cairns. Since its opening in 2008, it has never turned a profit and it operated at a loss of some \$330,000 last financial year. Analysis shows that this development was never financially viable. When two separate expressions of interest processes for private sector partnership to take on the project failed to secure a commitment, a rational person would have asked why no private operator wanted to put their money into this project. Not the former Labor government. They simply ploughed ahead and built a state-of-the-art walkway in the middle of a rainforest themselves using \$10 million of Queensland taxpayers' money.

In the last three years close to \$450,000 has been spent on advertising and marketing activities, including \$150,000 alone on corporate branding exercises. Whilst I am determined to save the facility, I have an obligation to stem the haemorrhaging of taxpayers' dollars into Labor's failed thought bubble. I am determined to work with the local tourism industry and the Mamu traditional owners to find a new and innovative way to make the project viable in the long term.

Projected annual visitor numbers for the walkway showed that the former government was banking on up to 500,000 people coming through the door during the 2011-12 financial year. However, the actual visitor numbers has not even reached five per cent of those projected figures. From July 2011 until the end of May 2012, 15,700 people visited the walkway. That is a bit of a discrepancy there. Just like with the now infamous Brisbane ski jump, we are again seeing the same scenario played out when it comes to the former Labor government's botched schemes—lack of a credible business case, lack of common sense and no regard for the use of taxpayers' money.

The Newman government is working collaboratively with tourism operators across Queensland to cut the red tape and create an environment where the ecotourism industry will flourish. We will deliver what I believe will be great economic benefits to all people in Queensland, regardless of whether you are visiting our national parks or working in this state. We have no choice but success. There is no other option.

**Mr BYRNE:** I refer to page 11 of the SDS and the funding allocation to national parks. Can you please explain to me in your own words the meaning of the cardinal principle of national park management? Can you confirm that this is still a guiding principle for national parks under your government?

**Mr DICKSON:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the member very much for the question. Very clearly, under the LNP government, we have made strong commitments and they are not like Labor commitments of the past. We will actually fulfil the commitments that we made because I know when Labor was in government they made commitments every day. They made promises every day but they broke their promises every day, like the fuel subsidy and the selling of assets in Queensland. That is the path they went down.

I think the hypocrisy of the question is that Labor did not really have a clue. We are going to rewrite the Nature Conservation Act and we are going to make sure we protect our national parks into the future. We are going to make sure that the 12½ million hectares of land that we own that covers national parks, forestry and other titles of land is all used for a purpose. We are going to make sure that our national parks have genuine protection and that there is money put in place so they can be looked after in perpetuity. We will do that through ecotourism development. We will do that through some of our forestry land being utilised for other purposes and not just have it sitting there. People need to be aware of what is going on in our national parks and forests.

If you look up at that insignia on the back wall or on the wall in Parliament House, you see Queen Victoria. We have red deer on that wall. Queen Victoria gave us seven, but we now have 30,000 roaming throughout the state. We have many brumbies wandering through our national parks. We have

wild pigs infesting our national parks and forests. We have pests and weeds. All of these things need to be looked after. We genuinely want to do something about it. Under the previous government, they just let it happen. They sat back in their free corporate boxes watching the football as the world passed them by. It was a sad indictment on the previous Labor government because one of the gentlemen sitting across the table now was there and he was a part of it when it all happened. I know that the new member has a lot of ability and he probably does genuinely care about our national parks. We are happy to work with all Queenslanders to make sure we get the best possible product for the best possible dollar, but we are genuine. We say what we mean and we mean what we say. We are going to deliver for all Queenslanders. We have a fabulous Premier who is doing the right thing by Queensland by being open and transparent. We are going to deliver for all Queenslanders regarding our national parks.

**Mr BYRNE:** Clearly, as there was no mention of the cardinal principle, I can only assume that it is not relevant to national parks. Let us try something else—something that underpins sustainable economic development. You as the minister are going to make a number of decisions in your path to turn national parks into a four-wheel-drive fun zone. Can you explain to me the precautionary principle in your own words, how you will be using it to make decisions and inform the decisions you make, and how you are going to record those decisions in the vein of open and transparent government?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member again for the question.

**CHAIR:** I remind the minister that it is a fairly wide-ranging question and it slipped a little way from the budget, but I will leave the discretion as to whether to answer that in your hands.

**Mr DICKSON:** I do appreciate the question. I am sure it is a genuine question and that is the way I take it. I understand the precautionary principle extremely clearly. I understand it from a planning perspective and from a human perspective. As far as four-wheel driving in our national parks is concerned, you may have heard of an island called Moreton Island. We have four-wheel driving on Moreton Island. You talk apprehensively about four-wheel drives going into our national parks. That is one that allows four-wheel drives and it always has. Four-wheel drives have been allowed there for a long, long time. If you are opposed to that, you should get a horse and you should ride along those beaches.

**Mr BYRNE:** I have got national parks. See what four-wheel drives do there.

**Mr DICKSON:** We will allow you to do that in the future as well. We are opening up our national parks and we make no apology for doing so. I want to see Queenslanders, Australians and people from overseas coming here, spending their money, going to our national parks and working with us to maintain and protect our national parks in the future. Do you know that the best way to protect something is to let people know it is there, and that is what we are doing. We are open for business. We are going to utilise our fire trails and we are going to let horse riding and mountain bike riding—do you know pushbikes?

**Mr BYRNE:** So you are not going to do any assessment whatsoever?

**Mr DICKSON:** If you would like me to answer the question I would be pleased to do so. I have let you ask the question and I am just answering it to the best of my ability. I talked about the precautionary principle. I talked about your accusation of four-wheel drives going all through our national parks—they are not. They are going on Moreton Island and into other national parks that they have always gone into. We have actually opened up some of the accesses on these beaches. Under Labor's rule, access to some of our national parks was closed. They stopped people utilising four-wheel drives to get around our pristine islands. I want to see people use these facilities. I want to make sure—and I have the responsibility under the direction of the LNP government—we open up our national parks for business to entice people to come here and spend their money. The other side of the House has not quite got their head around yet that we had \$65 billion worth of debt. That is \$65,000 million dollars. When you were sitting back in those corporate boxes at the football, the debt continued to escalate. We have to resolve—

**Mr BYRNE:** You are over \$20 million.

**Mr DICKSON:** As I said to you earlier, I am happy to answer the question.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Point of order, the member for Mackay and the member for Rockhampton continue to interject whilst the minister is obviously trying to answer the question. If you have a supplementary question you can wait until the minister is finished answering and then ask it.

**CHAIR:** I am not going to entertain the point of order, but I understand where you are coming from. Members for Mackay and Rockhampton, I have been patient. The minister is answering. They do not need your cajoling or your support. You had your turn in government. The minister is answering a question. You have put the question. Let them give the answer. We will all be wiser for it. I thank you to not continue to interject.

**Mr MULHERIN:** With all due respect, if the minister throws barbs we have the right to throw them back.

**Mr DICKSON:** I will continue with the answer. As I was stating earlier, the Newman government went to the election with a very, very clear mandate. That is why there are 78 members of the LNP government sitting in the other chamber at the other end of this building and there are only seven Labor members. We have made a commitment to the people of Queensland and slowly but surely we are fulfilling every single commitment that we made to the people of Queensland. Unlike the previous Labor government, which continued to make commitments and then not keep any of them—and I say that very clearly. They did not keep the pledge for the 100,000 jobs except by employing people within the internal ranks of government. They did not keep their commitments about the fuel—

**CHAIR:** I remind the minister that we are wandering a little off song and the same rules of engagement apply to you in your responses. So can you bring your responses back to the access to national parks with four-wheel drives?

**Mr DICKSON:** Thank you for your clarification. Relating to the four-wheel drives and the precautionary principle, I believe that this government has fulfilled all of the commitments that it made in the election. We are opening up our parks and our forests to ecotourism, and we make no apology for that. I do look forward to bringing a bill to parliament when we rewrite the Nature Conservation Act. It is going to be such an important pillar in our economy. It will create jobs. It will open us up for business. I am very proud to sit here with all LNP members in this House.

**Mr BYRNE:** Director-general, I have two simple questions. One, how many rangers were employed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service on 24 March and how many are employed now? I am happy for you to take that on notice if you need to. That is all categories and all descriptions of rangers. The second one is: have you or any of your department had discussions with anybody regarding undertaking recreational shooting on national parks?

**Mr DICKSON:** Point of order, I am sure that we can ask one question at a time. If the director-general has enough time to answer those questions, we would like to take them one at a time if they are the rules.

**Mr BYRNE:** I will do them one at a time. That is fine.

**Mr DICKSON:** Would you like to repeat it again?

**Mr BYRNE:** The first question is: how many rangers were employed by Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service—all categories—on 24 March this year? How many are employed now?

**Dr Glaister:** I am going to have difficulty in alluding to the dates, but I can answer the sense of your question. Once the department was formed, on 30 June 2012 there were 1,115 full-time equivalents in National Parks. Looking at the number of rangers, at 23 September 2012 there were 714.7 FTE rangers. You may be aware that, with the machinery-of-government changes, there were a number of wildlife rangers who transferred to Department of Environment and Heritage Protection. So the wildlife rangers actually moved across to a different agency. To answer your question, there has been no reduction in the number of rangers per se. It fluctuates seasonally. We do employ rangers temporarily for things like fire control. We do have things like pest management programs where we will bring on people for a short period. It does move somewhere between about 710 and 750.

**Mr BYRNE:** They are temps, are they?

**Dr Glaister:** No, they are brought on for a particular job. So if we got funding for a fire control program, we would put people on to do that and at the end of that they will not be continuing.

**CHAIR:** You had part 2 of the question?

**Mr BYRNE:** The second part is: has anybody in the department had discussions with anybody about recreational shooting on national parks?

**Dr Glaister:** There is a large number of people in the department, but to my knowledge no-one has talked about recreational shooting. We do have arrangements with the Australian Shooters Association; together with landowners, we do have contractual arrangements. We might have a pest management program for pigs, dogs and things like that, but that is with the association. We do not deal with individual recreational shooters.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to the minister. With reference to your department's SDS, specifically the operating and capital expenditure, I refer to Strangler Cairn, the sculpture on the Conondale Great Walk. How far is the sculpture located from the entrance, what visitation has it received since it first opened and what was the cost of the project?

**Mr DICKSON:** I thank the member very much for the question. Again, this reflects how money was spent, the viability of the previous government and what value Queenslanders always got for their everyday dollar that they paid in taxes. For the content of this natural beauty of our national parks they spent well over half a million dollars of taxpayers' money on an international artist enhancing a remote area with an artwork that is designed to eventually disappear. Labor placed this pile of artfully arranged rocks on an offshoot of a 50-kilometre walking track which takes experienced bushwalkers four days to cover. The sculpture is a 25- to 30-tonne stone cairn located along a section of the Conondale Great

Walk several kilometres from the track entrance at Booloumba Creek. The sculpture incorporates a rainforest strangler fig planted on top which, over time, will encase the stone sculpture. Materials and equipment were helicoptered into the site, a process overseen by the local QPWS rangers. I am advised that total funding for the project granted by Arts Queensland was \$684,200 including GST.

The Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service provided in-kind support by way of planning, logistic management, site management and construction assistance, which has been estimated to have cost \$15,825. For around the same amount of money, taxpayers could have enjoyed 10 kilometres of new walking or bike tracks, a camp ground with facilities including car parks, toilets and landscaping. Labor rejected a submission from a native artist to create artwork for the area when the idea was first floated. It instead chose to spend \$330,000 commissioning an international artist who specialised in creating work which will eventually be destroyed by the surrounding environment. Because the rugged area in which they decided to place this sculpture can only be accessed by foot, a further \$50,000 was spent on helicopters lifting rocks into the project. As with so many ludicrous schemes we have seen from the Labor government, this had absolutely no serious business case, no plan in place, to ensure any sort of value for money, just a lack of common sense and no regard for the use of taxpayers' money. I note that the member for Rockhampton told the media that it was a waste at the same time the member for South Brisbane was out there defending it. Which one of the two Labor members do you think was right? That is the question I ask you.

**Mr BYRNE:** Do you want me to answer?

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I have a question for the acting director-general. Regarding the Springbrook Rainforest Restoration Program, what was the total acquisition cost of the project and how many properties were purchased?

**Dr Glaister:** In 2005 the then government commenced an acquisition of freehold parcels in the Springbrook area under a program called the Springbrook buyback strategy, also known as Springbrook Rainforest Restoration Program. I am informed that there was over \$40 million spent on the purchase of 45 freehold lots covering a total of 705 hectares on the Springbrook Plateau. Twenty-eight parcels, or 476 hectares, were gazetted as national park, increasing the size of Springbrook National Park by 8.1 per cent. The cost of managing the new national park area is estimated to be \$45,000 per annum and these expenses include managing pest, fire, maintenance and other estate management obligations. In addition to this, there were 11 parcels, or 176 hectares, gazetted national park (recovery), which is a tenure designation given when the areas require rehab or other works to achieve a level of environmental condition sufficient to be included as national park.

The cost of management and rehabilitation of national parks under recovery is borne by the Australian Rainforest Conservation Society, or ARCS, under the Springbrook restoration agreement. That group is paid \$10,000 per annum for a grant under the restoration agreement to undertake the activity. In addition, ARCS have peppercorn lease-back arrangements for two accommodation facilities, Koonjearre camp and the Lyrebird Retreat luxury cottages where operating profits are required to be returned to the rehabilitation of the lands under the agreement.

Finally, there are an additional six parcels of land, or 51 hectares of estate, that remain as freehold. So the total management costs for these lands is \$90,000 per annum, which includes \$54,000 in labour costs for the administration of leases, managing repairs and maintenance, managing tenures and legal issues including easement agreements, and the oversight of the ARCS agreement. The remaining \$36,000 for maintenance obligations includes sewage pump-outs, hazardous tree management, utilities and general maintenance obligations for buildings to meet legislative obligations. ARCS also have rehabilitation/land management obligations over five of these freehold parcels.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing has now expired.

**Mr DICKSON:** Mr Chairman, I would like to thank all committee members. We have taken on notice the question relating to RQL. We endeavour to get that back within 24 to 48 hours. I thank all members here for their time, particularly you, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** There is one question on notice. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you and your departmental officers for your attendance. The transcript of this morning's session of this hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website at about midday today. The committee will now break for morning tea. The hearing will resume at 10.45 with the examination of the budget estimates for the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.31 am to 10.45 am**

## **ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE— ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS**

### **In Attendance**

Hon. GW Elmes, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs

**Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs**

Mr R Weatherall, Director-General (Acting)

Mr W Briscoe, Deputy Director-General (Acting)

Mr M Skoien, Executive Director, Corporate and Client Services

Mr A Cunneen, Executive Director, Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office

**Family Responsibilities Commission**

Mr D Glasgow, Commissioner

**Multicultural Affairs Queensland**

Mr G Page, Executive Director

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 **CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs, departmental officers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Peter Dowling. I am the member for Redlands and chair of the committee. Mrs Jo-Ann Miller is the member for Bundamba and deputy chair. She is unable to join us through proceedings this morning and has been replaced by Tim Mulherin, the member for Mackay, in that capacity. Other members of the committee are Steve Davies MP, member for Capalaba; Aaron Dillaway MP, member for Bulimba; John Hathaway MP, member for Townsville; Desley Scott MP, member for Woodridge, who is also unable to join us through this part of the proceedings but may join us during the course of the morning; Dale Shuttleworth MP, member for Ferny Grove; and Michael Trout MP, member for Barron River. I also welcome the member for Rockhampton, Bill Byrne, who is a visiting member.

The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the portfolio of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs. The committee will examine the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs on his portfolio from 10.45 am until 12.15 pm. The committee will suspend proceedings for lunch from 12.15 pm to 1 pm, afternoon tea from 3 pm to 3.15 pm, and dinner from 6 pm to 7 pm.

I remind all those present that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. In this regard I remind members of the public that under standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators, which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in this room. Please switch off mobile phones or pagers or switch them to silent. I would also remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. I will guide proceedings today so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from the government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers and their departmental advisers that their answers to questions should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs open for examination. The time allocated is one hour and 30 minutes. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr ELMES:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. Could I at the outset recognise the traditional owners of the land on which we meet today, the Turrbal and Jagera people, and elders past and present. Could I also at the outset recognise the work done by committee members, parliamentary staff

and my departmental staff in preparing for today. With me is the acting director-general of the department, Ron Weatherall; Matthew Skoien, the executive director of Corporate and Client Services in the department; and David Glasgow, the Family Responsibilities Commissioner, who will be present for the first part of the hearing. Though they will not be taking part in proceedings today, I also recognise my two assistant ministers: David Kempton, the Assistant Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs; and Rob Cavallucci, the Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Queensland has a new government with a new approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to help them secure a better future. The Newman government agenda is focused on ensuring that state government funding is directed towards programs and services which will improve the stability and sustainability of Indigenous communities. Indigenous Queenslanders and new residents from overseas can look forward to better targeted and more focused programs, despite savings we have had to find to help rebuild Queensland's budget base. Necessary budget savings introduced as part of a whole-of-government effort to get the state's finances back on track will be offset by more efficient service delivery and not duplicating federal government programs. Other savings will come from reduced publication and management costs and some funding for multicultural community support groups, advisory services and events.

We must be under no illusion about the challenges we face. Today it is still the case for Queensland's Indigenous people that babies are more likely to be born underweight than non-Indigenous babies, that Indigenous adults are more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous people and that Indigenous males have a life span 10.4 years shorter and Indigenous females have a life span 8.9 years shorter.

One way to confront these realities is to encourage and assist the development of young Indigenous people into leadership roles. Bright and enthusiastic young Indigenous people can see positive future possibilities. Young people from Aurukun, Mapoon, Napranum and Weipa at the Western Cape York Youth Summit inspired me with their solutions to matters that impact upon them and their communities.

I have had the privilege of seeing firsthand Indigenous communities creating economic and employment opportunities. Twenty years ago, community elder Roy Gibson had a vision to transform his community at Mossman Gorge by creating a visitor centre and ecotourism venture to capture the growing number of tourists attracted to the pristine World Heritage area. This year, Mr Gibson's vision was realised with the support of the Murday family gifting land for the visitor centre, which now employs 60 proud local people. I was even prouder still to stand on that land with Mr Gibson and just see how proud he was to be able to live and work on his traditional land. In Hope Vale the Aboriginal council, through mayor Greg McLean, has completed the planting of 8,000 banana plants and the construction of a dam. These projects will provide ongoing employment and opportunity.

In recognition of both the realities we face and the availability opportunities, I have decided to focus on the following portfolio priorities: improving employment opportunities; land tenure options and homeownership options; and empowering communities. I intend to work within this framework to deliver better and more targeted services to help Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure a better future for themselves.

Working with local leaders and the community as a whole to develop solutions to their problems is fundamental to tackling Indigenous disadvantage. The review of alcohol management plans operating in 19 Indigenous communities is an example of that theory in practice. The protection of women and children from harm was an overriding principle for the implementation of AMPs, and that is still the overriding principle as part of this review.

There is an astounding richness in the multicultural composition of Queenslanders. Some 20.5 per cent of Queensland's total resident population was born overseas. At diverse events across Queensland I have seen the passion that specific multicultural communities and the broader community have for celebrating Queensland's multicultural heritage. We will support and help them get the recognition they deserve and give them greater presence as part of a coordinated statewide week of events. We will replace the one-day, Brisbane based Multicultural Festival with a Queensland Multicultural Week that will take place across Queensland. We need to celebrate our truly multicultural state across all of our regions and to be as relevant in Cairns as we are in Brisbane. In addition, in 2013 we will see a dedicated Chinese lunar new year week and an Italian week to celebrate these groups' remarkable contributions to Queensland.

2013 also represents the 150th anniversary of blackbirding, the practice of forcibly bringing South Sea islanders to work in Queensland. I am pleased to advise the committee that a commemorative preprinted envelope will be issued by Australia Post to commemorate this anniversary. My department will consult with Queensland's Australian South Sea islander community on a theme to be displayed on the envelope. The Australian South Sea islander community will be given priority status at the recently closed Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program.

In terms of some of the savings and cuts we have had to make, as the Premier said on the opening day of estimates, we have had to do some things that are very difficult. They are done in the very best interests of the future of Queensland and the people of this great state.

**CHAIR:** We will now examine the Family Responsibilities Commission. I welcome David Glasgow, the commissioner, to the proceedings. I call the member for Rockhampton.

**Mr BYRNE:** I refer to page 25 of the SDS and in particular the number of agency notifications received. There has been a marked increase in the number of notifications from the estimate for 2011-12 to the actual in 2011-12 and then again to the estimate for 2012-13. The notes indicate that this is partially due to an increase in out-of-jurisdiction notifications. There would obviously be some wastage of resources in this. Are any steps being taken to train departmental officers making these notifications in the legislative parameters for notification to reduce out-of-jurisdiction notifications?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Rockhampton for the question. He is talking about an important area, because out-of-community notifications can play hell with the figures that we try to use to give us a sound basis for making decisions when it comes particularly to the Family Responsibilities Commission. Over the time I have been the minister I have had a number of conversations, both face to face and over the telephone, with Commissioner Glasgow about these matters. I think at this point it would be far better, in terms of giving you the detail that you want on this, if I ask the commissioner to make some further remarks.

**Mr Glasgow:** When this project commenced, the process whereby we received notifications from the department of justice was in some way predicated on their capacity to give notices. When that was researched, the easiest way to do it was by way of postcode. For instance, if we were dealing with Mossman Gorge we would receive all of the notices from the Mossman court, which would cover all of the people north of Cairns within that jurisdiction. Consequently, we may receive 40 or 50 notices per week of people going through that court system.

To eliminate overwork in our office, we would take the court lists, which were provided to our commissioners for Mossman Gorge, and they would proceed to go through those and identify those people on the lists so that we would not spend time trying to determine which person was in jurisdiction, let alone a resident of Mossman Gorge. A similar situation would happen at Weipa, for instance, where we would get all of the Weipa notices, because a number of people from Aurukun might venture into Weipa and commit an offence. We would take those court notices to my commissioners on my regular fortnightly visits. They would identify who were residents of community and still resident of the community, because some people may have moved to another community close to Weipa, and then we would conference those people and do the searches to identify those.

In Cooktown a similar matter exists because the Cooktown court, up until recently, did sit in Hope Vale once per fortnight. It also sits in Wujul once per fortnight during its sittings, but a number of people are dealt with in Cooktown so we would get the whole of the Cooktown notifications. We simplified the workload, because for Justice to reorganise their computer system was a very expensive exercise. So that is how we worked the system in relation to court notices. Education notices come identified by students. So, really, that is not many out of jurisdiction. Some people are, of course, employed and therefore no longer in receipt of welfare and, therefore, fall out of jurisdiction. That is a simple search through our records with Centrelink. In relation to child safety matters, similar searches can be undertaken. So the majority of matters out of jurisdiction really were for court notices.

**Mr BYRNE:** Thanks.

**Mr ELMES:** Can I just add that on 31 August this year the Queensland government announced an extension of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial for another year. So it will now extend—this extension—for the calendar year 2013; so it will finish at the end of December next year—with a budget of \$5.65 million. That, of course, will be subject to the enactment of the Family Responsibilities Commission Act amendment bill 2012 later this year. Of the \$5.65 million, \$1.6 million will be provided to the Family Responsibilities Commission's operations throughout the 2013 calendar year and the Australian government has undertaken to fund the balance of the operating costs of the FRC.

**Mr BYRNE:** Minister, I refer to page 25 of the SDS and to the increase in notifications. The increase in notifications is also explained in the notes as being contributed to by the increase in jurisdiction of the Magistrates Court under the Moynihan reforms. What proportion of the increase is due to those reforms?

**Mr ELMES:** I would like to thank the member for Rockhampton for the question. In terms of those notifications, the number and type of notifications across the four communities varies considerably depending on how far down you want to drill into it—if we are looking at school attendance levels, if we are looking at crimes against the person; there is a whole range of those things that we look at, including the notifications that finish up before a Magistrates Court. But again, because you are drilling down into that specific detail, I might just get Commissioner Glasgow to add a bit more detail to that.

**Mr Glasgow:** In relation to your question, not a large number relate to the Moynihan matters. As you know from those amendments, more serious matters can be dealt with in the Magistrates Court. Most of the notifications relate, from my analysis of that, to alcohol related matters—that is bringing

alcohol into communities. My discussions with police have indicated to me that much of that information comes from local information—from people now volunteering it. So they are getting more people to do in people bringing alcohol into the communities.

The actual number of charges in relation to injury to one another—domestic or otherwise—has substantially decreased in all four communities as it has across the Cape. It is interesting to see those numbers going down. The majority of matters seem to relate, as I said, to alcohol—driving or bringing alcohol into communities and, of course, those domestic matters that you referred to.

**Mr ELMES:** Can I also just add that I hope during the course of the proceedings we get an opportunity to delve a little bit further particularly into areas such as sly grogging and home brewing—the degree of that—and what we need to do to arrest these things that have just really got out of control not just in the four communities covered by the FRC but throughout Indigenous communities generally.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I refer you to the answer provided in your response to question on notice No. 9 about the operation of the Family Responsibilities Commission. Can the minister or the commissioner provide more detail on how the commission works with other services within the four communities in which it operates?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Bulimba for the question. The Family Responsibilities Commission—or FRC—forms a key part of the Cape York Welfare Reform trial, which operates in the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The FRC supports the re-establishment of local Indigenous authority and the restoration of positive social norms. You have heard from Commissioner Glasgow, who has already outlined to the committee about some of the great work that the FRC commissioners and he do in the four communities that I have outlined. I am advised that the commission has become an integral component of the four communities in which it operates. Certainly, when I go into these four communities I see the respect in which Commissioner Glasgow and his commissioners are held. Community elders and leaders have welcomed the effect that it has had on community stability and social cohesion.

On 31 August 2012, as I said before, the Queensland government announced an extension of the reform trial for another year until the end of 2013. The FRC will continue operating in 2013—of course, subject to the bill that is now before the House. As I have said already, there will be \$1.6 million allocated to the FRC operations in 2013 and the Australian government will be funding the rest of that. The FRC operates by holding conferences with people who live in the trial communities—people who are the recipient of welfare payments and who have come to the attention of the FRC through a notification due to failing to enrol or send children to school, the conviction of an offence in a Magistrates Court, a breach of a tenancy agreement or being served child safety notifications. Conferences involve the person sitting down with the FRC, which usually consists of Commissioner Glasgow and two local commissioners, to discuss the matter which led to the notification and coming to an agreement on how to address the situation. If the person is unwilling to agree on an appropriate course of action, the FRC may order the person to attend an appropriate community service support. Services include wellbeing centres, parenting programs, family income management, school attendance, case managers and ending Family Violence and Ending Offending programs. As a last resort, the FRC may issue a conditional income management order, where 60 per cent or 75 per cent of welfare income is managed by the Department of Human Services through a basic card for a period of between three to 12 months. When a client is due to come off the basic card, a number of processes are undertaken by the FRC, including a review of the client through attendance at a scheduled conference to discuss the consequences of the expiration of the income management order, advice provided by local commissioners in handling the social and relationship impacts of the increase in cash availability, or an option provided of referral to services to assist with financial and family impacts such as the wellbeing centres.

There are currently 18 local commissioners across the four trial communities. There are six in Aurukun, four in Coen, five at Hope Vale and three at Mossman Gorge. The local commissioners play a key role in the acceptance and success of the FRC in restoring local authority in these communities. Local commissioners are respected persons within their communities who have demonstrated leadership and conviction involved with the vision of the FRC. They are nominated for appointment by community justice groups in their respective communities, except in Hope Vale, where the Congress of Clans provides the nominations. In 2012-13, the FRC will continue to conference and operate as it has to date.

I would like to conclude with a note of concern about the tardiness, however, of the federal government in the provision of an evaluation report on the Cape York welfare trial. As I mentioned earlier, the FRC is a key component of the trial. The report was originally due at the end of last year, and then in the middle of this year. Now, we are advised that we will have the report at some point in November of this year. This trial is an important and costly initiative. It is disappointing that the federal government has not regarded it with sufficient priority to get the evaluation report completed in a timely manner. If I could just add that both the Queensland state government and the federal government are contributing, I think from memory, \$850,000 each to this evaluation.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, commissioner, for your time here today. We will now continue with the examination of the proposed expenditure for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander areas of the portfolio. So thank you, David. I call on the member for Mackay.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, can you please outline how many public servants who have been or will be sacked as a result of your government's mass sackings identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Mackay for the question. As I have said many times during the course of the process, since the election we have been remarkably lucky primarily due to the fact that out of the election has been the creation of a brand-new department—a department that was not there before, a department that has been set up by the government because the government recognises the importance of Indigenous people to our community and the importance of multicultural people in our community. So when the department was set up it was set up in such a way to be a pretty lean old machine.

I advise the member for Mackay that there were 401 full-time equivalent positions that were transitioned from other departments in March 2012—that came across to the new DATSIMA. Of those, 369 FTEs came from Communities, five FTEs came from Education and Training, 21 FTEs from Environment and Resource Management and six FTEs from the Public Service Commission. The department's estimated actual FTE figure for 2011-12, as at 30 June 2012, was 389. The reduction of 20 FTEs included three fewer SES positions, with the remainder mainly non-recurrent positions. A further 24 positions have been abolished as part of the departmental saving target required by the CBRC. On the other hand, this is offset by an increase of six positions in the Cape York land tenure resolution program, resulting in the 2012-13 estimate of 363 FTEs.

The member referred to the number of Indigenous employees within DATSIMA. The percentage I cannot give you—my maths are not that good—but I can tell you that 25 per cent of the people who are employed within the department are Indigenous.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Is your government still committed to Project 2800?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Mackay to the question. Program 2800 or 2800—spin it as you wish—was an initiative of the previous government. I have just said to you that 25 per cent of the people employed within my department are Indigenous. In talking about that, of course, we are bearing in mind a goal over the next six years not only with Indigenous people but the entire Public Service workforce to reduce unemployment to four per cent over those next six years.

Project 2800, as you refer to it, is an initiative, as I said, of the previous government that aims to increase new employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the public sector and at the same time meet 2.6 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public sector representation. This goal of 2.6 per cent was agreed to by the Queensland government. The previous Queensland government, as part of COAG's national partnership agreement—the NPA—on Indigenous economic participation. Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the public sector I believe can significantly contribute to the employment cap.

Can I also advise that the government remains committed to prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the Queensland public sector. Given the machinery of government changes and the establishment of many new agencies, the government will need to reconsider agency target setting, reporting and the accountabilities of that. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public servants work in front-line roles. Opportunities exist to increase Indigenous employment in these areas in line with the government's commitment to boost front-line services.

So in terms of being able to say to you are we going to proceed with the previous government's Project 2800, I have not put my mind to sending out a press release, member for Mackay, saying that we agree with the previous government's philosophy, but in this particular case can I say that I am committed, as the minister in this particular area, in my department to doing everything I possibly can to see Indigenous employment grow. Any of my ministerial colleagues will tell you that I am a bit like a dog with a bone when it comes to pushing schemes and ideas that I have in terms of bettering the lifestyle and wellbeing of Indigenous people across this state. So, every opportunity I get I push it.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Good to hear, Minister. There are about 95 people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent in your department. How many across the whole Public Service? What is the shortfall that we are chasing if you are committed to Project 2800?

**Mr ELMES:** Can I say to you that I am working—

**Mr MULHERIN:** I thought with your other hat as Minister Assisting the Premier on Industrial Relations—

**Mr ELMES:** As you would be aware, member for Mackay, I am the person assisting the Premier. The Premier's appropriation day was at the start of these proceedings.

**Mr MULHERIN:** With your enthusiasm that you would take it up with your ministerial colleagues like a dog with a bone, I thought you might know how many across the whole Public Service.

**Mr ELMES:** Absolutely, and I am happy to answer the question. You will need to go back in time to get another question in to the Premier.

**CHAIR:** Members, these interjections are not helpful.

**Mr ELMES:** Can I say to the member for Mackay that when I came into the job I did not get a briefing on this. Again you will forgive me if I am working off memory a bit, but as I understand it the target of 2800 was not going to be met when we came into government. And I am not saying that the previous government was not endeavouring to get there, but the fact of the matter is that it simply was not going to get there. There was, as I recall, something like 90 Indigenous people who needed to be employed each week throughout the rest of the financial year within the Public Service to attain that figure. As I said, I am not suggesting for one moment that the previous government was not sincere in trying to get there, but the fact of the matter is that that figure of 2800 was not going to be met.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I refer to page 3 of the SDS and your whole-of-government responsibilities, in particular to deliver opportunities for change in education, health and employment for Indigenous Queenslanders. Over 78 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders live in urban areas such as Brisbane, Mackay, Rockhampton, Cairns and Bundaberg. I note the minister has continued the previous government's LEAP—learning, earning, active, places—strategy and I ask how your government cuts to jobs, front-line services and programs will impact on this program and its associated measures and targets, in particular employment for Indigenous and Torres Strait Islanders?

**Mr ELMES:** Thank you, member for Mackay, and, of course, you are talking about the LEAP strategy. We have been very careful when we have looked at the savings that we have had to make as part of what the Newman government has committed to over the last few months. Can I advise the committee that, as the member for Mackay said, 78 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in cities and towns and regional centres in this state. Quite often, unfortunately I think, they are somewhat pushed to one side because when you are talking about news items and events and so forth it tends to centre on the 19,500 Indigenous people who live in Indigenous communities, particularly in the cape.

The LEAP strategy was launched in 2011 to improve the delivery of government services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in urban and regional areas by increasing access to, as you said, education, employment, health and housing opportunities. In 2011-12 \$1.798 million was allocated to the strategy and on that basis ATSI administered \$1.262 million—\$1.578 million to deliver 164 Queensland community projects, including \$.536 million in grants administered by sport and recreation services and \$220,000 for the delivery of the deadly stories campaign, which again I hope we get an opportunity to explore further during the course of today. In 2012-13 \$1.172 million has been allocated to implement the strategy.

Can I also advise the member for Mackay that there has been no reduction in regional staffing. One of the things that I was absolutely clear about is that our regional offices and our regional staff, and we looked at any of the staffing cuts that we needed to make, must absolutely be protected. Can I also advise that there has been no reduction from the department's point of view in the LEAP budget.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, thank you for that, but the question around LEAP is getting people earning or learning. A vital part of that strategy was Skilling Queenslanders for Work, of course. Now with that program abolished do you think you will meet those targets under the LEAP program?

**Mr ELMES:** Can I say to the member for Mackay that I watched an exchange between yourself and Minister Mr Langbroek yesterday in relation to this particular area. As I have said before, this is an issue that falls within the portfolio of appropriation for the Minister for Education. If you wanted to explore this in terms of the LEAP strategy then you should have really—

**Mr MULHERIN:** But you have responsibility across government of ATSI policy. You have wiped your hands of it?

**Mr ELMES:** I recall the questions and there were a lot of Indigenous questions that were being asked by you and your colleagues to the minister about Indigenous programs during the estimates hearing into his department. You really should have asked him.

**Mr MULHERIN:** You did not go into bat to keep a program for skilling the most disadvantaged people in Queensland?

**Mr ELMES:** I understand that they are the most disadvantaged people in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, member for Mackay, this is not helpful. Member for Mackay, you have finished that line of inquiry now?

**Mr MULHERIN:** The question is did you make representation for the retention of programs which would assist Indigenous people in achieving either a job or going on to further education so that you could meet the targets under the LEAP program?

**Mr ELMES:** I will tell you what I have been doing in the five and a half, six months, whatever it is, that I have been the minister. I recall being asked by a journalist when I came into this job how many Indigenous communities I had been into and I was able to advise the journalist that I had not been into any, if you exclude Mount Isa about 40 years ago when I was a junior radio announcer up there. Can I

say that what I have done since I have been the minister is spend a lot of time, both in Indigenous communities throughout the cape and elsewhere and also in the south-east corner. And one of the things that I have been doing is looking at and looking for schemes and programs that can provide those vital employment opportunities that you were talking about, member for Mackay. They are there. They are out there and there are a lot of people who are doing some absolutely fantastic work in terms of that. These are people who both work within the government sector and outside of it. If I could just seek the committee's indulgence just for a second to outline one that I am particularly proud of and I promote at every opportunity that I get.

I had the opportunity to go to Mount Isa and spend some good quality time with the former Speaker of the House, Tony McGrady, who is now the mayor of the city. We had a good look at Indigenous issues up there. While I was there I flew out to Camooweal, which is about 182ks from Mount Isa and then went to a place called Myuma which is 6½ks from Camooweal. To say it is in remote Queensland is pretty true. The whole operation that is there is an operation set up by a wonderful fellow by the name of Colin who has driven this so hard to make sure that there are employment opportunities that are made available, particularly in the mining area. He has somewhere between 30 and 60 young men mostly—not always, but young men mostly—who go through this and if they apply themselves 100 per cent of the people who go through this find jobs because he makes sure that they find jobs.

**CHAIR:** I call on the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** My question is for the minister and I am very privileged to actually ask him the question. Can the minister please outline what benefits could be expected from the Cape York Welfare Reform in planning Indigenous service provisions on the cape after the trial is completed at the end of 2013?

**Mr ELMES:** Can I thank the member for Capalaba for the question and I am honoured to answer. The Cape York Welfare Reform commenced in March of 2008 and is a partnership between the Queensland government, the Australian government and the Cape York Institute. As we heard from the Commissioner before, it operates in the communities of Hope Vale, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge and Coen. The objects of the trial are to restore social norms in local authority, to change behaviours in response to chronic levels of welfare dependency, social dysfunction and economic exclusion. There is no question that these objectives are what most Queenslanders would hold up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland—not just for the four communities who are involved in the trial.

As with any trial, this trial must have an end date and it must be demonstrated that it has gone at least some significant way towards achieving its objectives before consideration can be given to entrenching or expanding the programs or initiatives making up the trial. That end date was originally to have been 31 December 2011. Towards the end of 2011 the former Queensland government and the Australian government agreed to extend the trial for a further 12 months to 31 December 2012. Our government has recently agreed to commit to a further extension of the trial to 31 December 2013. Both extensions have involved a financial commitment for the continued operations of the Family Responsibilities Commission and to programs associated with the trial and an amendment to the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 to extend that expiry date. The proposed extension to 31 December 2013 will be subject to enactment of the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2012.

The Newman government will not be committing to any further extensions of the trial, but we will be obviously working towards learning what has come out of the trial to inform our future work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Queensland. The 2012 extension and the proposed 2013 extension of the trial, including the extended operations of the Family Responsibilities Commission, were in large part necessitated because the final report of the independent evaluation that was originally expected at the end of 2011 is now not expected until November 2012. Despite the fact that the evaluation has not been finalised, it is apparent that there have been a number of benefits of the trial which can inform the Newman government's policy and program development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities beyond the expiration of the trial.

I will just outline to the committee some of those benefits. The development or restoration of local leadership and authority: the first phase of the evaluation was an implementation review of the Families Responsibilities Commission 2010. This report found that the FRC appears to be continuing to restore local authority by empowering and supporting local and emerging leaders in the form of local FRC commissioners. In particular, the report referred to local commissioners making important decisions, modelling positive behaviours and expressing their authority outside the operations of the FRC, positive effects on school attendance and the calmness of communities. Wherever I go I hear the word 'calmness'. Consultations conducted with key stakeholders and each of the four trial communities and with the government and other stakeholders in June 2012, in preparation for the Newman government's consideration of a possible extension of the FRC for the calendar year 2013, found a commonly held view that the trial, including the FRC, has had a positive effect on the behaviour of community members,

with more children going to school and the communities being quieter than before the trial commenced. It was noted from the consultations that the trial has been regarded by many as a key driver for improved school attendance and school readiness.

There has been a positive community response to the case management or conferencing approach to assisting families adopted by the Families Responsibilities Commission. This helps families address issues affecting school attendance, tenancy issues, criminal behaviour, child welfare and neglect issues. There has been a positive community response to a number of programs currently funded by the state government in the trial communities include a parenting program, the Ending Family Violence program and economic development programs. I will be awaiting the final report of the evaluation before suggesting other benefits of the trial that could inform future decision making.

Of course, any future policy and program development incorporating learnings from the trial will be subject to the fiscal environment at the end of 2013 being much improved to the environment we have currently been forced to operate in. To date the trial has been very expensive. If it has benefited anyone, at the moment it has benefited only the people who live within those four trial communities. One of the discussions I have already had with Commissioner Glasgow is that at the end of 2013 the last thing that we want is for everyone to pack up their bags and leave, losing the legacy of the trial and losing the knowledge and expertise of the people who work for the Families Responsibilities Commission. One of the conversations that I had with Commissioner Glasgow in Cairns a few weeks ago was beside a rack that was full of files on people whom the FRC commissioners had come into contact with. That we could get to the end of 2013 and somehow burn or shred those files is something that cannot happen and cannot be allowed to happen. We need to be able to find some money and keep the expertise, to try to do what we can to extend across all 19 Indigenous communities the benefits that we have learned over the past few years through this trial. That is something that we will spend a lot of time discussing in the calendar year 2013.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** Minister, would you be so kind as to outline the progress on the review of the alcohol management plans across the 19 Indigenous communities, one of which is in my electorate?

**Mr ELMES:** I would be delighted to. I note the member's very great interest, not only in the review of alcohol management plans but also in conditions generally on Palm Island, for which he is responsible. Two weeks after I first became the minister, one of my first trips was to address the Rocky group of mayors in Cairns. At that meeting I raised the review that we had promised during the course of the election campaign. A couple of weeks later I was again in Cairns and I addressed the Indigenous leaders' forum, which included Indigenous mayors, councillors, CEOs and so forth. Again, we raised what the government was planning to do with the review of AMPs. As I have gone to each Indigenous community, I have sat down with the mayors, the CEOs and others within the community and talked about what we were planning to do.

On 3 October this year, only a couple of weeks ago, we got together somewhere in the region of 50 or 55 Indigenous leaders from across the state. Mayors, councillors, CEOs, the LGAQ, Liquor Licensing and people involved in service delivery in the communities were all together in one room. We sat down and we went through, item by item, what we are proposing to do. Only one mayor was not able to get on a plane and be there. I think 14 or 15 mayors were present. Each community received a pack that talked about the history of alcohol in the community. It also outlined Indigenous harm rates in the community, school attendance levels in the community historically, and it set out very concisely what we wanted to do in terms of the review of the AMPs.

I have made it clear everywhere I have gone and I will make it clear again to the committee today that this is a process that must be owned by the community. I engage with the mayors as the democratically elected leaders of their communities, but it is something that will have to be owned by them and owned by the rest of the community. By that I mean community justice groups, women's groups, men's groups, the health professionals in the town and the police in the town, so that when a proposal of some kind is presented to government it is a proposal that is owned by all and it is a proposal that will need to be lived up to by all.

We have not set a date in any way, shape or form by which these proposals must reach government. This is something that will be done at the time and pace of the community. We will send people from my department into those communities as often as is required to help them put these projects together. Dereck Walpo is the mayor of Aurukun, which is a dry community and he wants it to stay that way. If that is the view of his community, that will be the view of the government. If they want to keep a dry community, that is what they are entitled to do. Other mayors want to see a complete transition away from alcohol management plans in their entirety. Some other mayors are looking for a situation where you might have a tavern that operates under limited hours, where food is prepared and served. To me—and this is not me trying to put words in anyone's mouth—that seems a situation where families can go and have a meal with their friends and their relatives, just like you and I can, but the tavern is open for a short number of hours each and every day.

I know you want to hasten me along, but this is a very important point that I really need to make. When these proposals come back, I made the point that they need to be owned by the communities. I say this to some of the mayors who say they want to turn the tap on completely, so to speak: you might be a hero today if we were to approve the proposal, but no council in Queensland holds a liquor licence. Liquor licences are held by other people. If a liquor licence is provided today it might be a lot of fun, but if the provisions of the liquor licence are not adhered to that licence could disappear tomorrow. And disappear tomorrow it will if there is any suggestion at any time that women and children are being abused or neglected, or if attendance rates at schools start to go down. I suggest that this is an opportunity for us to have a mature discussion with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elected officials, which is what we should do. They are elected. We should have that mature discussion and we should work with them as best we possibly can to get the best outcome we can for them.

**Mr TROUT:** Minister, would you please outline to the committee what role is filled by the Remote Indigenous Land and Infrastructure Program Office in Far North Queensland and how the office contributes to the work of his department?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Barron River for the question. I am very pleased to have with me today Allen Cunneen, the Executive Director of the Remote Indigenous Land Infrastructure Program Office, which is a very long title. We refer to as the program office, which makes it a lot simpler when we are going through these things. I would like to invite Allen to take a seat. While he is making his way to the table, I will highlight to the committee the important role the office plays in contributing to the improvement of housing incomes for Queensland's remote Indigenous communities and also to the successes of DATSIMA.

The program office was established to provide the leadership to drive cross-agency coordination and effective delivery of the Queensland government's extensive capital works programs across remote Indigenous communities from the Torres Strait to Cherbourg. For the 14 communities under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, security of tenure is a condition of Australian government funding. However, the work of the program office is more about land availability. It is also about working closely and in true partnership with councils and trustees of these communities to enable them to make the decisions that are needed to grow a promising future. It is about supporting councils to become good decision makers. It is about building and maintaining strong working relationships with communities to ensure that local aspirations and concerns are considered in planning for capital works and it is about driving other state governments so that the Queensland government works together in a coordinated and truly effective way. Now I would like to ask Allen Cunneen to give the committee some more detailed information on the program office.

**Mr Cunneen:** I thank the minister for the opportunity to answer today. The key function of the role of the program office is to ensure that longer term administration constraints and barriers to land development across all discrete communities are addressed in a timely manner, whilst facilitating driving solutions to infrastructure hurdles for each of the individual communities. The objectives of this office are to ensure that all Queensland government owned land and buildings are effectively utilised; sequencing land and infrastructure development; prioritising demand for land and related infrastructure; ensuring planned capital works can be delivered in timely way; ensuring each community has an adequate survey network covering roads, government land and buildings and that land use planning schemes are developed; addressing native title, cultural heritage and outstanding leasing and tenure issues; and assisting councils to develop their capacity to fulfil their ongoing responsibilities in land planning and land administration.

The achievements of the office to date are that in excess of 1,500 deed of agreement to leases have now been signed by the trustees of the councils of these communities. In excess of 700 leases have been executed to allow housing lots to have a 40-year lease. Nine communities now have road network surveys registered and the remaining seven communities are on track to meet the deadline by mid next year. Land use planning schemes are now under way in each of the communities. The first of these planning schemes for Wujal Wujal, Cherbourg and Kowanyama have reached approval for public display and comment. The remaining nine plans are running closely behind and are on track and going to state interest review.

Native title compliance negotiations are moving forward in each of the communities. A good example is the ILUA, the Indigenous land use agreement, for Woorabinda which was recently registered. This allowed land development and subdivisions to occur in that community and this year new homes will be built on that land. Subdivisions are also under development and each of the communities that require service lots for new housing constructions can move ahead. These communities are Aurukun, Hope Vale, Kowanyama, Napranum, the northern peninsular region, Palm Island, Woorabinda and Wujal Wujal. In the past few months, the program office has also been involved in opportunities for employment and training and business development coming out of this investment through infrastructure and housing construction.

The combined outcomes of the work of the program office including the development of land, the construction of homes, dealing with the law, land tenure and title issues and ensuring that employment opportunities are maximised means that homeownership in Indigenous communities can be easily

attained. Moving forward, the program office will continue to ensure that land availability targets for the Queensland social housing program are met or exceeded. The program office will also continue to build its achievements with the Torres Strait by progressing with the social housing ILUA and a broader regional ILUA across the Torres Strait, ensuring that road network surveys are on track and completed by mid next year and that road network surveys are completed across the Torres Strait and preparing land use planning schemes for all the remaining communities and Torres Strait communities.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I refer to your answer to question on notice No. 4. On a couple of occasions this morning you have made reference to the deadly stories campaign. Can you please provide the committee with more information about the success of this campaign?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Bulimba for his question. Before I answer, could I just give the member for Mackay a bit of clarification on a question that he asked me before with regard to staffing levels in DATSIMA. Can I advise, as I think I did, that most Indigenous staff in the department are in front-line positions which have not been affected by savings. I can also advise that of staff who have left the department as a result of savings four were Indigenous employees.

Can I now advise about the deadly stories campaign. When I came into this role I was wondering what deadly stories was all about. It was certainly something that I got to understand very quickly. It celebrates leadership and achievement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As part of NAIDOC Week in Brisbane this year, I was very pleased to announce the latest batch of inspirational young Indigenous people to become part of the deadly stories gallery. I think somewhere or other we have some of the postcards that the department has produced to really highlight some of these wonderful young people.

The online campaign recognises the mark made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Queensland. It is very easy to get involve. All anyone needs to do is to log on to the deadly stories section of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs web page. Individuals can share their own deadly stories, a story about someone they know or a story about a project happening in their community on the deadly stories gallery. There are stories about quiet achievers, budding entrepreneurs and international sports stars who are following their dreams, working hard and making a difference, whether it is in their local communities or on the national stage.

The Queensland government's deadly stories campaign now features another 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have achieved success through a broad range of fields. I will give you a couple of examples of some of those people. Jamie Lovell is an aspiring ranger who was involved in developing infrastructure in the Fraser Coast wildlife sanctuary. Rory O'Connor is a broadcast journalist and museum director at the museum in Beenleigh. Bianca Bond was the 2010 Sunshine Coast Regional Council's Young Citizen of the Year award winner. A particularly favourite of mine, because he comes from my part of the world, is Lyndon Davis of the Sunshine Coast. He operates the Gubbi Gubbi Dance troupe. They do a fantastic job at NAIDOC activities and Australia Day activities.

Can I just say, Mr Chairman—and I know you are wanting to move on; you are always hurrying me up—that this is what we do. I seek leave to table the postcards for the benefit of the committee.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted to table the postcards? There being no objection they are so ordered.

**Mr ELMES:** When you go around this state and go into Indigenous communities sometimes you see a lot of despair. When you come across people like these and some of the young coming through and the various activities that they do it gives you a lot of hope for the future.

**CHAIR:** I remind people that they can go to web page to see those deadly stories postcards. I call the member for Mackay.

**Mr MULHERIN:** I table page 2 and 4 of the report entitled 'Incorporating the quarterly report on key indicators in Queensland's discrete Indigenous communities—overview and general trends'. The data shows a positive trend over the time of hospital admissions for assault related conditions declining and reported offences against the person declining. I also table a copy of a *Courier-Mail* article which quotes the Premier as stating before the election that the alcohol management plans had not been successful in reducing alcohol related violence. You indicated that there were signs that the plans had worked. Minister, who is correct in their comments—the Premier or yourself?

**Mr ELMES:** Of course the Premier—he's the boss!

**Mr MULHERIN:** So what you are saying is wrong?

**Mr ELMES:** Could we put a smile on our face! Rates of crimes against a person and attendance rates for kids going to school vary across all the communities. They can vary also depending on the time of the year. One of the things that comes through AMPs is that you need to look at this on a community by community basis. Every community has a different reason for the restrictions that are involved. As I was saying before with Aurukun, it is a completely dry community. Aurukun is a dry community but sly grogging is an enormous problem there. A \$50 bottle of rum in Cairns sells for \$250 in Aurukun. So you have people living in that community who are living off the misery of their friends, their neighbours and their relatives.

Mornington Island does not have a problem with sly grog, but they have a hell of a problem with home brewing. I have had presented to me evidence of the sort of home brewing that is done on Mornington Island using things like vegemite. That has a high alcohol content.

Getting to where the member for Mackay is coming from, in terms of hospital admissions for assault related conditions as an example, overall there were seven communities that showed evidence of reducing rates of hospital admissions. Six showed a decline from 2002-03 to 2010-11. They were namely Coen, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Pormpuraaw, Wujal Wujal and Yarrabah. Yarrabah has been declining since 2004-05.

**Mr MULHERIN:** That is a trend, is it not?

**Mr ELMES:** It is a bit hard to see it from here. It depends on the community you go to. There is a trend downwards, I am happy to say, in most of the communities. I would not be giving you the right information if I did not point out one that is of enormous concern which is Cherbourg. In terms of crime against the person it is something like 40 times the state average. We have huge problems in places like Cherbourg and to a lesser degree on Palm Island and in Woorabinda. Other communities seem to be getting the problem under control.

**Mr MULHERIN:** So you can guarantee that these results will not decline due to any outcomes of the AMP review your government is currently undertaking?

**Mr ELMES:** I have made it very clear to the mayors and to anyone else who will listen that when they put their proposal to government they need to be able to prove that they have plans in place that will continue to drive down any assaults or negligent of women and children. I want to see those things continuing to go down and I want to see school attendance rates continuing to go up. That needs to be a part of the proposal and the proposal needs to detail the plans that that community will abide by. Can I say member for Mackay, if those plans are not there then the proposal will not be getting approved.

**Mr MULHERIN:** So the Premier was wrong in his pre-election statement.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for consideration of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander affairs has concluded. We will begin our examination of the multicultural affairs portfolio. I call the member for Mackay.

**Mr MULHERIN:** It has been announced that 500 jobs in regional Queensland are being cut by Ergon Energy prior to the summer season. Did you know about these mass sackings and what is your response, as the Minister Assisting the Premier, given the Premier's repeated claims that front-line services are not at risk? You are the minister responsible—

**Mr ELMES:** Nice try. I was not quite sure that the 500 people you refer to at Ergon are all of multicultural descent. Member for Mackay, we have just moved on to No. 1 the estimates hearings for multicultural affairs and No. 2 if you wanted an answer to that question you had the opportunity to ask the question of the Premier who has responsibility for that. I am the minister assisting. I am not the minister in control of that. I would suggest maybe a question without notice to the Premier when the parliament resumes might get you the information you are after.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Principal ministerial responsibilities—public sector industrial relations, public sector wage policy and enterprise bargaining. Minister, it is a government owned corporation.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay, I am seeking advice on the issue of relevance. The information is contained in the SDS as part of this committee's range of responsibilities. The question is relevant, though I am not entirely sure about its relevance with the budget process as it relates to private—

**Mr MULHERIN:** As the minister said, there are no doubt people who work for Ergon who come from various ethnic backgrounds. Minister, can you respond to that as the Minister for Multicultural Affairs?

**CHAIR:** I would ask the member for Mackay to hold on for a second. I am getting further advice that this particular line of questioning does fall outside the SDS and is not relevant. It is part of the principal ministerial responsibilities but not contained within the SDS. I am going to rule the question out of order. Do you have a question that relates to multicultural affairs?

**Mr BYRNE:** Stakeholders have commented on the regular attendance of your assistant minister at multicultural events. How many events in Brisbane have you attended since being sworn in as the minister? How many has Assistant Minister Cavallucci attended?

**Mr ELMES:** I would like to thank the member for Rockhampton for the question. Off the top of my head I really do not have that information. I certainly do not have access to Assistant Minister Cavallucci's diary, surprising though that may seem. Can I say that I do rely on Assistant Minister Cavallucci to attend many multicultural events around Brisbane and the south-east. I attend as many as I can. I take a particular interest in attending multicultural events throughout the state.

On 28 October I am going to Mackay for Global Grooves which is held in Mackay. I will be going to Mackay on that day to attend that function. I have attended functions in other regional parts of the state including the Central Highlands and Mount Isa. If you would like us to get our diaries out and start totalling them up it may take us a little while to get it.

**CHAIR:** I would remind the member for Rockhampton that we are to scrutinise the budget and not travel itineraries and the events a given minister has attended. If we can refer to the budget it would be helpful.

**Mr BYRNE:** It is relevant to page 5 of the SDS and the \$1 million associated with the 174 multicultural events. So it is all about the events that we are supporting out of the SDS and the role that ministers and assistant ministers have in supporting those events and representing the government at those events. I think it is directly relevant to the budget. I am happy to have you table it or take it on notice.

**Mr ELMES:** Absolutely. We will have a look at that for you.

**CHAIR:** I am not entirely sure that the member for Rockhampton has proved relevance in as much as the funding is allocated for events. Those events and activities have occurred or will occur, as I understand it.

**Mr MULHERIN:** He attends.

**CHAIR:** The attendance of it is probably less critical to the success or enjoyment of the event for either the minister or the participants.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Chair, are you reflecting on the minister's capability to respond to a question?

**CHAIR:** I am questioning the relevance of the question.

**Mr ELMES:** We have to go back to basics here. Every week—there are seven days in the week—there are multicultural events. There are events to do with Indigenous communities that surprisingly are held across the seven-day period as well that I attend and that Rob Cavallucci attends as the Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs. As I said a little earlier in the proceedings, in the earlier part of my time as the minister I have been spending a fair bit of time in North Queensland. When I go to North Queensland, to make sure that I get value for taxpayers' dollar, I try to work my visits to Indigenous communities in with multicultural events such as the ones that I have attended and I have just talked about at Mount Isa and Emerald and the one I am going to in Mackay and so on. If there is a night spare and there is an event on, guess what? One of us will go.

**Mr BYRNE:** What was the multicultural affairs budget for 2012 and what was the budget for the multicultural affairs section within your department this year?

**Mr ELMES:** Thank you very much for the question. The budget for Multicultural Affairs Queensland for 2012-13 is \$4.8 million. The 2011-12 budget reported in the Department of Communities SDS was \$8 million. There is a reduction there of \$3.2 million and that relates to the following: \$1.255 million in grant and program savings in the 2012-13 budget; approximately \$1 million in deferrals in 2011-12 from the prior year for the Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program not replicated in 2012-13; and approximately \$1 million reduction in the amount of corporate costs allocated to the MAQ service following its transition from the former Department of Communities to DATSIMA.

In terms of program savings, the program savings of \$1.255 million consist of the following: \$335,000 in budget savings applied to CAMS, LAMP and the ECCQ programs; \$500,000 in savings in the multicultural partnerships grants; \$100,000 from the reduction in the Queensland Multicultural Festival budget of \$250,000 in 2011-12; \$60,000 from the cessation of the Premier's Multicultural Photographic Awards; \$50,000 from the cessation of the interpreter and translator scholarships; \$125,000 from the cessation of the planned anti-racism strategy given the release of the National Anti-Racism Strategy; and \$85,000 from the reduction in funding to the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters in order to bring Queensland's contribution to the authority back in line with other government contributions.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Minister, as you said in your opening statement, next year we commemorate the sesquicentenary of Australian South Sea Islanders. As you know, Mackay has probably the largest population base of Australian South Sea Islanders in Queensland. I would like to note the sad passing of Mr Cedric Andrew, who would be the oldest Australian South Sea Islander in Queensland, who passed away yesterday at over 101 years of age. Minister, in the year that we are commemorating the sesquicentenary of the arrival of the Australian South Sea Islanders, will you give a commitment that you will review the Australian South Sea Islander action plan and also, to assist in the commemorations on a state-wide basis, will you appoint an officer from Multicultural Affairs Queensland to coordinate events right across Queensland, working with local governments and Australian South Sea Islander community groups? So the question is about the action plan and coordination?

**Mr ELMES:** I can certainly tell you in terms of coordination that the department has already gone some way in doing that.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Is there a dedicated officer?

**Mr ELMES:** No. I will do better than a dedicated officer; I will give you a dedicated department. How's that? Because that is what the department is doing. We have had extensive discussions in the department now with Garry Page.

**Mr MULHERIN:** Who will be the single point of contact? Garry Page?

**Mr ELMES:** Garry Page will be the single point of contact as he heads up—

**Mr MULHERIN:** For council and community members.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mackay.

**Mr ELMES:**—Multicultural Affairs in my office. We have already made some plans and held a number of meetings, including a number of meetings when we had community cabinet in Proserpine which I attended. You would have heard that we have already received from Australia Post which has been a very welcome development—I am not sure now of the description of it—a stamped envelope that Australia Post will distribute during the time of the commemoration which will signify the importance of this event. That will be a national thing that they will do, and we are going to engage with the South Sea Islander community to come up with a design for the stamp that will appear on the envelope.

We have also written to the various cane grower associations because, as you would know, member for Mackay, the South Sea Islanders that came primarily from the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu—the New Hebrides as it was; Vanuatu as it is now—and some 80 other islands in the South Seas were brought to Queensland to work in the cane fields. We have been talking to the cane-growing organisations and companies about that.

I think one of the tragedies here is that, having virtually put these people into slavery, we then I think around 1906 decided because of the White Australia Policy that we were going to send most of them home. One of the things that is not regularly known is that a lot of those young men when they came here either married or partnered with Aboriginal women, and now in places like Vanuatu and the Solomons you have a mix of the Aboriginal culture in those particular islands and we should never lose sight of that.

In terms of the multicultural grants this year—and this is public knowledge—we have said that we would give preference to community groups who are wanting to put together some sort of celebration or some sort of an event that will highlight the 150th anniversary of the South Sea Islanders being brought to this country.

**Mr MULHERIN:** What about the action plan, Minister?

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Can the minister please advise the committee whether the Queensland Multicultural Festival in its previous format was a success? If not, what changes would he like to make so that it is more relevant to the multicultural groups right across the state?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Bulimba for the question. I am pleased to advise the committee that Queensland is to get a new week-long multicultural celebration stretching the length and breadth of the state. I requested my department to review the one-day Brisbane based Multicultural Festival to ensure its continued relevance with current government priorities. I questioned whether a one-day festival in Brisbane properly represented the rich multicultural heritage right across Queensland.

Queensland is a truly multicultural state and we need to consider options for initiatives to reflect and celebrate that across all of the regions. I want to be sure that what we do is as relevant in Cairns as it is in Brisbane. We will also be considering contemporary ways of highlighting Queensland's multiculturalism more broadly through a week of activities across Queensland in 2013. There are many festivals celebrating different cultural and ethnic groups throughout the state. I want to ensure that they have the support they need, to help them to get the recognition they deserve, to give them a greater presence as part of a coordinated state-wide week of events.

The recently released 2011 census data confirms the continuing growth of multiculturalism across the state, with more than one in five Queenslanders now born overseas. This includes the growth in both South-East Queensland and regional areas. For example, the percentage of people born overseas has increased by 35 per cent in Bundaberg and Rockhampton in the period between the 2006 and 2011 census. In Gladstone the figure is 29 per cent. At Mount Isa there has been a 25 per cent rise. The increase in Mackay is 21 per cent. Increases have also been recorded in other regional centres up and down the state.

Queensland is home to people from more than 200 different cultures who speak more than 220 different languages and embrace more than 100 different religions or belief systems. The census data highlights Queensland's increasing cultural diversity. In Queensland more than one-third of the population reported having at least one parent who was born overseas. Some interesting facts point to a significant increase in the number of Queenslanders from an Indian background, from just under 11,000 at the time of the 2006 census to over 30,000 in 2011. We have also seen significant growth in the Chinese and Filipino communities in Queensland, with percentage increases of 80 per cent and 57 per cent respectively. With the increase in the 2011 figures, I have asked my department to update the popular 2006 *Diversity Figures* publication with information from the census, and this will be available later in the year.

The Newman government remains committed to working closely with Queenslanders to ensure multiculturalism is viewed as a positive and valuable resource for the state. We continue to support multicultural groups and communities through initiatives such as the Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program, the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships Program and the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program. Multiculturalism has brought social and economic benefits to all Queenslanders through jobs, exports, cross-cultural exchange and quality of life. The multicultural mix of Queensland has changed considerably over recent decades. No-one can argue reasonably that multiculturalism has been to the detriment of our society. We are stronger and more tolerant because of it.

**CHAIR:** I am mindful of time as I call the member for Ferny Grove. There are two minutes left.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to minister. Minister, what funding is available to support local multicultural events and projects as a means to celebrate local diversity, to increase understanding and to help bring these communities closer together?

**Mr ELMES:** I thank the member for Ferny Grove for the question. In my relatively short time as minister I have already had the pleasure of sharing in the fun and festivity of events celebrating diversity across the state. As I said before, whether it is in the Central Highlands at Emerald or to the far west at Mount Isa, Queensland's regional multicultural heritage is alive and well. Whether they are small or large, like some of the better known festivals around the state, the enthusiasm for sharing their culture is no less.

One thing I have learnt is that cultural enthusiasm is not restrained by group size or remoteness of location. I look forward to visiting Mackay, as I have said, at the end of this month for the annual South Sea Islander festival Global Grooves. This will have special significance, as we have said before in the committee hearings that next year is the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the first South Sea Islanders kidnapped and forced to work in Queensland's cane fields.

As I have mentioned in a previous answer, the latest census figures reveal that more people from overseas are choosing to call more parts of Queensland home. The government is pleased to be able to support as many of these events as we possibly can across the state. Within my portfolio of multicultural affairs, funding for multicultural events and projects is available across Queensland under the Multicultural Queensland Partnerships Program through the annual grants round initiative. The program allocates funding to local government and incorporated non-government organisations to undertake multicultural events and community projects that—and I will give you four examples—strengthen the benefits of multiculturalism, increase community awareness and recognition of Queensland's rich cultural diversity, foster harmonious community relations and participation, and strengthen community capacity to access services.

The 2012-13 annual grants round closed on 10 October 2012 and eligible organisations had the opportunity to apply for funding of up to \$10,000 under four categories. The four categories are: week-long festivals, cultural heritage events, multicultural festivals and strengthening capacity programs. You will be interested to know that the new Queensland Multicultural Week will take place in September 2013. Cultural events that are held during that week will also be eligible for funding under the week-long festivals program. The government has also allocated total funding—I am on overtime now, aren't I?—for more than \$1.8 million per annum for the next three years for 13 local councils and 16 organisations across Queensland under the Local Area Multicultural Partnerships Program and the Community Action for a Multicultural Society program respectively to employ more multicultural employees.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The member for Rockhampton has asked whether you would take a question on notice to provide a list of multicultural events that you have attended since your appointment as the responsible minister and dates and a list of multicultural events that the Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs has attended since his appointment as Assistant Minister for Multicultural Affairs and dates. Would the minister take that on notice?

**Mr ELMES:** Yes, indeed.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for consideration of the estimates for expenditure in the portfolio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Multicultural Affairs has expired with only one question on notice. On behalf of the committee, I thank you, Minister, the Family Responsibilities Commissioner and your departmental officers for your attendance here today. The transcript of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website later this afternoon. The committee will now break for lunch. The hearing will resume at 1 pm with the examination of the budget estimates for the Health portfolio.

**Mr ELMES:** Just before we go, I thank the members of the committee for their diligence and enthusiasm in looking at the areas that I administer within my budget. I would like to thank particularly the opposition members for the way they have conducted themselves and the interaction between us during the course of today's proceedings. I would also like to particularly thank Amanda Powell for the work that she has done. As I said the outset, to my ministerial staff and to my departmental staff who have done an incredible amount of work in preparing for the day, my sincere thanks to everyone.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.17 pm to 12.59 pm**

## ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE—HEALTH

### In Attendance

Hon. LJ Springborg, Minister for Health

Mr A Bibb, Senior Policy Adviser

#### Department of Health

Dr T O'Connell, Director-General

Ms K Magill, Manager, Office of the Director-General

Dr M Cleary, Deputy Director-General, Health Service and Clinical Innovation Division

Ms K Byrne, Chief Executive, Health Services Support Agency

#### Health Quality and Complaints Commission

Mrs C Herbert, Chief Executive Officer

Dr R Stitz, Commissioner

#### Queensland Institute of Medical Research

Prof. F Gannon, Director and Chief Executive Officer

#### Hospital and Health Services

Dr R Ashby, Chief Executive, Metro South Hospital and Health Service

Ms S Kolaric, Chief Executive, Torres Strait—Northern Peninsula Hospital and Health Service

Ms L Dwyer, Chief Executive, West Moreton Hospital and Health Service

Dr P Bistrow, Chief Executive, Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service



**CHAIR:** The hearing of estimates by the Health and Community Services Committee is now resumed. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Minister for Health, the CEOs of statutory bodies, the departmental officers and members of the public to this hearing. I am Peter Dowling MP, the member for Redlands and chair of the committee. Mrs Jo-Ann Miller MP, the member for Bundamba, is the deputy chair. Other committee members are Steve Davies MP, the member for Capalaba; Aaron Dillaway MP, the member for Bulimba; John Hathaway, MP, the member for Townsville; Mrs Desley Scott MP, the member for Woodridge; Mr Dale Shuttleworth MP, the member for Ferny Grove; Mr Michael Trout MP, the member for Barron River; and Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk MP, the member for Inala.

The committee will examine the expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2012 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Health as required by chapter 13 of the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly. The committee will examine the Minister for Health in his portfolio from 1 pm to 6 pm when we will break for dinner. The committee will suspend proceedings for a break from 3 pm to 3.15 pm. The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators. Please switch off mobile phones or switch them to silent. I must remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. I intend to guide proceedings to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers and their departmental advisers that their answers to questions should be finalised so that other issues can be examined. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Health open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, you may wish to make an opening statement. I remind you that there is a time limit of five minutes.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much, Mr Chair. A little over six months ago Queenslanders voted overwhelmingly to get Queensland back on track. Support to reform Queensland Health and modernise the state-wide health network was in fact stronger than the levels of support to change government. At least 77 per cent of the electorate cast a vote for either the LNP with a mandate to overhaul the entire government including the management of Queensland Health, or they voted for the Labor Party to retain office on a commitment that, if re-elected, they too would overhaul Queensland

Health. Approximately 50 per cent of the electorate cast their primary vote for the LNP. A further 27 per cent of the electorate voted for the Labor Party, which went into the election on the admission, and I quote the former Labor Premier, 'Queenslanders could no longer tolerate the sick administrative performance of this mammoth organisation.' Again, in regard to Queensland Health I quote the former Premier, 'In its current form it has a culture that is so entrenched it won't be changed while it is kept in that form.'

At least 77 per cent of the electorate also voted for parties whose policies were to decentralise health services. The LNP won office on a commitment to establish local hospital boards and to empower local communities and local health professionals with decision-making powers. Labor also promised similar reform with its then deputy leader proclaiming, 'I think that in the interests of everyone who works in the health system in Queensland that we do need to do away with Queensland Health, we do need a new structure in place, we need to return control to local regions, to local hospital networks.'

I highlight this background because I acknowledge that this government has been making some tough calls and some tough decisions as we work to rebuild Queensland Health and restore public confidence and trust in health care in this state. But it is also important to acknowledge that the overhaul of Queensland Health's corporate office coupled with a commitment to decentralise services is part of this government's delivering on the mandate given by both Labor and LNP voters. This government inherited a health system defined by secrecy and long waiting lists, defined by routing of public moneys, defined by fake credentialled health workers, defined by a bungled billion dollar payroll system, and defined by a bureaucratic culture that obstructed rather than aided the critical work done by health professionals at the coalface. I cannot emphasise enough this government's commitment to our health workers and the enormous value and trust we place in them. It is regrettable in the extreme that for many their own reputations for professionalism, their work ethic and their personal dedication to care have been muddled and tarnished by a decade of maladministration.

This year's state budget earmarks \$11.862 billion for Queensland Health. This represents a 7.38 per cent increase from last year's budget papers, the last budget handed down by Labor. This 7.38 per cent increase to Queensland Health double underlines the Premier's commitment, the Treasurer's commitment and the LNP's commitment. It is a massive increase in funding and is significant if magnified and put in the context of the newly elected government and its inheritance of state finances and the loss of the AAA credit rating.

One of the first actions of the LNP government in Queensland was to establish the hospital and health boards and to engage with local communities and local health professionals with regard to that empowerment. I am pleased that every single hospital and health service has received an increase in this year's budget. Another significant issue for us has been to address the EB with nurses, where under the previous government they were not paid as much and some of them were not paid at all.

I also think this is a very significant opportunity for the committee to engage in some of the issues which are profoundly affecting the Health budget in Queensland. One of those is the previous government's health payroll bungle. I would certainly be very hopeful, as a part of seeking redress and getting answers to that \$1.25 billion bungle which started life as a \$6 million contract, that this committee could be of great assistance in encouraging the non-government members of this committee to be far more open and transparent than they have been, certainly within the parliament. Indeed, after the state election loss the Leader of the Opposition, the current Leader of the Labor Party, apologised for the previous government's privatisation agenda by declaring, 'We'—that is Labor—'should have taken the community into our confidence. Essentially there was a fundamental breach of trust and for that today I apologise.'

The question remains: when will the current Leader of the Opposition, who has the exclusive power to release potentially critical information on the failed payroll debacle that could save jobs—indeed 1,300 jobs—similarly take the community into their confidence? What actually happened with the failed payroll system? Why was legal advice hidden from the public and continues to be today? Why has no-one seriously been held accountable for what is undoubtedly one of the greatest and most costly IT bungs across any government in the history of Australia.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will begin with the examination of the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. I welcome Professor Frank Gannon, the CEO, to the table. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Professor Gannon, for QIMR's research on experimental immunotherapy treatment, to help a bone marrow transplant patient overcome a life-threatening infection do you use tissue donations?

**Prof. Gannon:** No, that is not done by tissue donations in the sense that perhaps we generally understand. What happens there is the material is obtained from the patient—the white blood cells from the patients themselves, which is a tissue, of course, formally speaking. It is then challenged *ex vivo*—out of the body—in the laboratory setting. We have a very highly specialist laboratory for this. Obviously great skill has to be applied to that. The challenge is to increase the immune response such that the immune system, which was not adequate to overcome the challenge of the virus which was involved in

this case, would in fact be greater and when reinjected into the individual—the same tissue from the same individual—that would have an opportunity to compete with and in this case win the battle against the cancer.

**CHAIR:** Before you proceed, could I ask any director-general or chief executive officer to announce yourself before the answer to a question? For the record, Professor Frank Gannon answered that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Professor Gannon, I understand that the Australian Infectious Diseases Research Centre, in which the QIMR is a partner, proposes further investment targeting, amongst other priorities, emerging infectious diseases. Will this include multidrug resistant tuberculosis?

**Prof. Gannon:** The Australian Infectious Diseases Research Centre is a very exciting collaborative opportunity that again shows how QIMR is working with other partners to provide the best possible outcomes for Queenslanders. The areas of expertise within the alliance in the centre between UQ and QIMR covers many different areas. Tuberculosis is not one of the top topics in that grouping but is one that we have spoken about very frequently in QIMR, because we are very aware of the growth and the continuous problems with multidrug resistance generally and of tuberculosis specifically. The fact that it is not there at present is something that we are trying to redress through recruitment.

You may be aware that QIMR currently employs 600 high-quality, high-income individuals in Queensland. We are currently expanding that with the opportunity that is presented by the new research centre that has just become available to us, and we will be able to expand that to about a thousand. We are in the process of recruiting, and one of the areas that we have identified in internal discussions is exactly that area—tuberculosis. What you need to get, though, is the right expert and the right expertise to do something about it. The same I am sure would be true in the UQ. They may have other experts that have not come across my screen to date, but we are very aware of this as a program and, indeed, multidrug resistance generally.

**Mrs MILLER:** Further to that, Professor Gannon, how will the closure of the only specialist clinical service in Queensland for tuberculosis impact on your research? Do you consider that this closure will put at risk our state's preparedness for a potential epidemic of multidrug resistant tuberculosis?

**Prof. Gannon:** We are a little bit further away from the patient than perhaps the question implies. The role of QIMR is disease oriented research. It is designed to identify disease topics and problems and to help provide solutions for those by working in collaboration with the clinicians. So I would have to say at this stage I do not have any information on how that would affect us.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to the minister. I refer the minister to page 187, paragraph 4 of the SDS in relation to the Queensland Institute of Medical Research. How will completion of the health and medical research centre at Herston support improved health outcomes for Queenslanders?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for his question. There is no doubt that the Queensland Institute of Medical Research does world renowned work and that is something which has continued over a long period of time with regard to successive governments in the state of Queensland. Indeed, if one looks back to the investment in smart technology and medical research in this state, it has a very proud history going back generations. If you compare our medical research and investment in this state, it compares extremely favourably with anywhere else in Australia. I think it is unsurpassed by any state in this country and may only be level pegged by Victoria at the very most. I would like to pay tribute to Frank Gannon and his team. Not only that, we have some other wonderful research institutions in this state.

QIMR, as I indicated, is a world-leading transitional medical research institute. QIMR focuses on three main research areas—cancer, infectious diseases, mental health and complex disorders. QIMR contributes to improved health outcomes through new diagnostic prevention and treatment strategies as well.

QIMR is in an accelerated growth phase, with the recent completion of its new medical research centre increasing the size of the institute by some 50 per cent. Its continued success is dependent on securing funding from both government and non-government sources, including community and philanthropic donations and income from commercialisation activities. Successful recruitment and retention of leading Australian and international scientists is a critical issue in this highly competitive sector.

In 2012-13, QIMR will receive \$14 million from the Queensland government, which represents 14 per cent of estimated revenue. This, together with competitive peer reviewed medical research grants, forms the institute's two most significant sources of funding. The state government grant and the operation it supports enables QIMR to leverage this funding to secure competitive peer reviewed medical research grants and other income of approximately \$71 million.

In 2012-13, QIMR is entering a period of accelerated growth, with the completion of its \$180 million health and medical research centre at Herston. QIMR is actively recruiting researchers in areas of high strategic importance to Queensland—including tropical diseases, vaccine development,

cancer and genetics—to increase its capacity by 50 per cent to approximately 1,000 staff and students over the next four years. There are higher operating costs also associated with the increased research activity and the newly opened medical research centre, but certainly, as the honourable member can see, this is a significant investment in the area of medical research in Queensland and it will continue to add to our reputation in this field not only nationally but also internationally.

**CHAIR:** I thank Professor Frank Gannon. The time has lapsed for the scrutiny of that part of the portfolio. We now move to the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and we welcome Professor Cheryl Herbert. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to Professor Herbert. Thank you very much for being here today. I see that Dr Russell Stitz is joining you at the table as well; thank you very much and welcome today. I refer to the Health Quality and Complaints Commission Service Delivery Statement in Budget Paper No. 5, page 181. I note that your staff establishment is 71 and your estimated income is about \$10.4 million and that these figures are relatively the same for 2011-12 and 2012-13. However, given the 28 per cent increase in consumer complaints experienced in 2011, do you expect to meet your service performance statement in 2012-13 of 75 per cent client satisfaction for the timeliness of responses?

**CHAIR:** Professor, you are not part of the panel so you are not able to answer questions at this time. If the CEO wants to field the question, that is fine.

**Prof. Herbert:** Yes, we have had an increase in our complaints to the organisation. We have at the same time had the Australian standards being implemented. We have been able to move staff from the standards area and quality monitoring into the complaints area, and we have begun waiting lists. At the moment, we have 49 on a waiting list and that waiting list is up to seven weeks. This is the only way that we can at the moment deal with the upsurge in complaints.

**Mrs MILLER:** So, Professor Herbert, if you had more money, you would be able to meet that 75 per cent target?

**Prof. Herbert:** I think client satisfaction that we have been measuring actually aligns with satisfaction with our process and satisfaction with staff handling, et cetera. Certainly, it is becoming evident that the waiting times are extending and that does reduce the complainant satisfaction and provider satisfaction.

**Mrs MILLER:** Can you give us some examples in relation to the clients who contact the commission? They obviously get very upset and stressed at the fact that you cannot meet the expectations. Would you like to run us through how the commission deals with that in terms of them being upset and concerned about the delays?

**Prof. Herbert:** We certainly at the moment are being quite upfront about waiting times. What we are doing is we are managing the expectation which absolutely assists them, rather than them thinking we will be on to that particular case immediately. We also give severity ratings to all of the complaints. It is a five-scale rating, with 4 being permanent harm and 5 being death when a loved one contacts us. Those have priorities, and the 1s, 2s and 3s are the ones that we are able to manage on the waiting list.

**Mrs MILLER:** Professor Herbert, I have a follow-up question. In relation to your staff establishment, will you be filling every position that may become vacant in this next financial year or will you be holding some of those vacancies?

**Prof. Herbert:** No, we are filling every position.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** My question is to the minister. I refer to page 180 of the Service Delivery Statement in relation to the oversight and reporting of healthcare quality issues. Will the establishment of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care impact on the operations of the HQCC?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Through you, Mr Chairman, I thank the honourable member. Can I just indicate that the Health Quality and Complaints Commission in Queensland does an excellent job in addressing the very difficult, challenging and often emotionally charged referrals they receive from members of the community. They are often very, very stressful and extremely difficult situations. Obviously, they can be very complex matters as well and they can take a significant period of time to investigate. Some of those matters are before the commission a year or even more, as we saw under the previous administration. The important thing is to have systems in place that ensure they can be properly addressed. The government has certainly been committed to providing appropriate resources to the Health Quality and Complaints Commission in Queensland.

It is also very true that what we are seeing now is more of a role. In July 2011 the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care introduced 10 new national safety and quality health service standards, and also mandatory accreditation of all relevant healthcare providers against the national standards will commence from 1 January 2013. To minimise duplication and reduce the reporting burden, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission is transitioning its Queensland healthcare standards to the national standards. HQCC will retire six of its nine Queensland healthcare

standards where duplication with the national standards exists on 31 December 2012. HQCC will retain three standards not covered by the national standards for a further two years with a view to retiring them in 2015. HQCC will continue to monitor healthcare provider compliance with a duty to improve the quality of healthcare services under section 20 of the HQCC Act. I say to the honourable member for Capalaba that, as we transition those particular requirements at a national level, it will also provide opportunity for the HQCC to be able to readjust some of their resources more around the issues of dealing with the serious investigative matters which they have to undertake.

**Mr TROUT:** My question is to the minister. I refer to page 180 of the Service Delivery Statement in relation to the budget of the HQCC and note reference to the recent national reforms. Is the introduction of the national regulation of accreditation for medical practitioners having an impact on the state oversight of the health system?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** If I can refer again to the issues of the commission and the work that it does, it does absolutely fantastic work but of course we have seen more transitioning to national standards and more transitioning to a national framework, and I think we have all agreed with that from all sides of parliament. Indeed that was actually passed in 2009-10. It also has raised some significant issues with regard to jurisdictional responsibility. That issue of jurisdictional responsibility was actually referred to by Richard Chesterman when he conducted a report into some serious allegations which were raised not all that long ago. It certainly exposed some of the real challenges we now have in regard to ensuring a seamless understanding of what is the responsibility of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission and what comes under APRA or its delegated body, which is the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia.

If you look at the credentialling, honourable member for Barron River, you will see that the issue of the registration of practitioners is done at a national level but the complaints are supposed to be handled by the Queensland Board of the Medical Board of Australia. I actually appoint that board but I appear to have little jurisdictional ability to be able to get access to the files I need to be able to address some of the very significant issues. That is one of the challenges I am having at the moment and I intend to raise it at the next meeting of health ministers because, frankly, it is absolutely unacceptable that, when issues which enliven public concern are brought to our attention, we are unable to actually act upon them in a timely manner and that leads to further dissatisfaction.

I think it is also creating some issues for the Health Quality and Complaints Commission with regard to the interface there. They might like to comment on that as well. It is certainly creating some issues with regard to dealing with complaints from my perspective.

**CHAIR:** Professor Herbert, did you have something to add?

**Prof. Herbert:** Yes. We have published in our annual report the waiting times we have had with APRA dealings. We have presented to the minister some suggestions for legislative change that would enable us to go back to some of the previous powers we had to review decisions made by boards, such as the Medical Board, and be able to have some power to ask that immediate action be taken when we see harm being done.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Professor Herbert, in relation to your funding for this year, do you intend discussing with the minister or the director-general having a specialist CBRC submission solely on behalf of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission seeking increased funding, bearing in mind the most important work that the commission undertakes not only on behalf of the community but also on behalf of the health profession and also confidence in the health system?

**Prof. Herbert:** We have been constantly asking for increases in our funding. We did have rollover funds from the old Health Rights Commission of \$3 million, and that has seen our shortfall but it has run out. The other side of that is to create efficiencies, which we are certainly doing, along with everyone else. We will be asking for increases, particularly as we have no non-labour budget at the moment and have not had CPI. We are going through the motions of finding all of the efficiencies. This next round of budget will see us requesting an increase.

**Mrs MILLER:** Minister, will you support the Health Quality and Complaints Commission in their bid for extra money through to the Treasurer and the Premier of Queensland, given the important work they undertake?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. I will certainly support any reasonable budget initiative which is brought to me when I have a clear indication that maximum efficiencies have been able to be delivered with regard to service delivery—a concept which is probably alien to our predecessor incumbents in Queensland. As I indicated a moment ago, the Health Quality and Complaints Commission in Queensland does good work. Its base level of funding has been preserved. As Professor Herbert indicated, there has been rollover funding in that area and they are also undertaking a process of looking at internal efficiencies in delivery, and that is something that we all should be doing across Queensland.

As I indicated a moment ago, the move towards more of the national standards with regard to quality issues will also lighten the load on the Health Quality and Complaints Commission in some of their areas and will provide an opportunity for them to be able to realign some of their resources. That has already been indicated by the commission.

Of course I always respond to reasonable requests in line with the economic circumstances at the time. I think the government's commitment in this year's budget has been very clear, and that is that we have preserved the base funding of the Health Quality and Complaints Commission of Queensland at a time of severe financial impact a lot of which was contributed to by the honourable member's time in government with the loss of the AAA credit rating and the extraordinary debt we now have.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for questions in relation to the Health Quality and Complaints Commission has now expired. Thank you, Professor Herbert, and thank you, Professor Stitz for joining us. We will now continue with questions about the appropriation for Queensland Health and hospital and health services. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, as outlined on page 12 of the Service Delivery Statement, I refer to the \$11.862 billion budget for Queensland Health this year, which I note is a significant 7.38 per cent increase on last year's budget. How does the Queensland Health budget for both this year and over the forward estimates compare to that of the Commonwealth government?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Considering the very tight fiscal times that we are in, the Queensland government has done a very good job in being able to make such a significant commitment as a 7.4 per cent increase in the Queensland Health budget. That is in line with the commitment of the Premier and the Treasurer as well. It is very important to also consider that what we do should not only be measured in the context of money; it should actually be measured in the context of the outcomes in healthcare delivery as well. That is something which many jurisdictions around the world are seeking to deal with and deal with in more innovative ways.

Looking at what we have in Queensland, if we have a uniform presentation framework—and I am talking about taking into consideration all of the factors that other states count, and some of them are across disability. That shows an increase in the state's health budget from \$11.85 billion in 2011-12 to \$12.83 billion—and I am just using a uniform presentation of putting in things that carry across other states, which would reveal a significant increase of around \$980 million. The reason I have used that uniform comparison is that, if you then look at New South Wales, there have been increases of 5.4 per cent; Victoria, five per cent; Western Australia, 8.2 per cent; South Australia, 1.8 per cent; Northern Territory, 4.5 per cent; and the ACT, which is 7.6 per cent. If you then look at the Commonwealth's figures based purely on public data that details Commonwealth payments to jurisdictions, the contribution to Health by the federal government is up this year by just 0.3 per cent. That is a \$46 million increase from \$15.4 billion in 2011-12 to \$15.46 billion in 2012-13.

Unfortunately, late data has revealed that these figures may not be correct and an estimated \$40 million has gone missing from previous projections of budget outcomes. I notice that the former Prime Minister of Australia the megalomaniacal egotist, Kevin Rudd, has disappeared in the last couple of days. We have not seen him running around, throwing himself prostrate on the street talking about this calamity, as we saw him walking around the PA Hospital the other day. In actual fact he has not been seen. Maybe he is over in the United Nations somewhere. At a time when we need him and also Wayne Swan to be fighting on behalf of Queensland against this little revelation of a \$40 million loss from our budget based on new criteria calculations from the Commonwealth around the census data, we cannot find him. Indeed, we cannot find any of the federal Labor MPs in Queensland. I would be very hopeful that we will see some action from our political opponents in Queensland because this could have quite a dramatic impact. The cost across Australia will be \$150 million and, indeed, on our calculations, \$40 million in Queensland alone.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** As a follow-up question, I note that page 1 of the SDS states—

The job losses in 2012-13 could have been reduced by a further 1,300 FTEs. Funds—  
were—

redirected to absorb the unfunded cost of the former Government's failed payroll implementation.

Minister, can you run this committee through the full impacts of Labor's payroll system on Queensland Health?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I think that this is one of the most unbelievable, unforgivable debacles ever seen in the area of IT and government contracting in the history of Australia. A contract which started out at \$6 million has grown into a monolith potentially approaching \$1.25 billion or more. As I have indicated previously, that is like paying \$400 for a Mars Bar or \$7 million for a base model Commodore. Only the Labor Party in Queensland could do something like that and say that it was a successful system.

If you actually look, it has had a serious impact on this year's budget. Indeed, there is a major unfunded component. The cost in this year's budget is around \$230-odd million of which over \$150 million is unfunded. We believe we will be able to offset that back to around \$130 million because

of the recovery of overpayments, and we have started a very aggressive process in consultation with our staff. I am saying that it is not their fault, but we do need to recover that money. We are working with them in as compassionate a way as possible. We do need to work through that process because that which we can actually identify does need to be repaid. The real problem we have is where does that \$130-odd million get accounted for? Of course, that equates to more than 1,300 FTEs in Queensland. Indeed, we can attribute the loss of those 1,300 FTEs to the honourable members who sit on the opposition side, who are completely unwilling to do the open and transparent thing when it comes to actually providing that legal advice that may assist us in being able to recover at least some of that money. A number of years ago we saw a similar exercise rolled out in Los Angeles using the same system, SAP. The Los Angeles school authority took some recovery action and at least offset some of their costs. The impact of this is apparent on jobs and potentially services because you just cannot go and find \$150-odd million floating around in your backyard. There is no money tree. There is no magic pudding. It has to be found somewhere. In the out-years it will be over \$500 million.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** We have just heard the health minister outline the debilitating effect that the Health payroll fiasco has had on Queensland Health and also on the services and jobs that it provides. What is more, it is a present that keeps on giving and that will be ongoing. In fairness, I think the committee needs to actually do this review and scrutinise those dollars. I am suggesting that we need to support the House's previous motion to obtain the release of the secret legal advice and the cabinet minutes from the opposition leader. I move that we adjourn so that I can table that motion with the committee.

**CHAIR:** I am not—

**Mrs MILLER:** I would like the chairman to call the Clerk to the table.

**CHAIR:** I am not going to call the Clerk to table. What I am going to do is make a ruling. We have been over this ground before and I understand the importance of that information. I accept and respect your right to do that, but I think we need to just keep going. The Leader of the Opposition thus far has failed to comply with a resolution of the parliament. We will keep moving forward—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Point of order, that statement is incorrect.

**CHAIR:** Could I ask the minister to clarify? Is there outstanding information from the Leader of the Opposition that you are waiting for that you have asked for?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The motion of the parliament quite clearly calls on the Leader of the Opposition to release the documents. It indicated that that information should be released to me. I would ask that an item that I have here—No. 2—be put up on the screen so we can see that motion of the parliament.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** This is just a shameful—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** That motion of the parliament calls on the Leader of the Opposition—

**Mrs MILLER:** That does not look like it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:**—to actually release data—

**Mrs MILLER:** It has backfired. You cannot get it on the screen.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have a whole heap of things there. So just hang on.

**Mrs MILLER:** What is this? Show and tell?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It actually calls on the Leader of the Opposition to release that information. The Leader of the Opposition is talking about openness and transparency. Today it still has not been released.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Christmas is coming, too. You just do not want to answer questions.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** What the Leader of the Opposition is offering up is a roll of gaffer tape for me to turn up and have a look at documents that I cannot tell anyone about, that I cannot take notes of and that I cannot copy. Therefore, it is completely useless to me, the parliament or anyone, particularly when it comes to the issue of making someone accountable for what we have seen with regard to this little Health payroll debacle.

**CHAIR:** Member for Inala, there is no inaccuracy in the comments I have made. I now call the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to the minister. Page 38 of your SDS provides an update on Queensland Health payroll. The payroll system appears to have a major impact upon the capacity of the department to deliver services into the future. Minister, are you aware of any other parties, apart from the members of the former Labor government, who claim to hold important information with regard to the payroll system?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes, indeed. I have actually received some correspondence in recent times from other people in relation to this. In particular, for some time I have been calling on the union movement in Queensland to actually stand up for their members and stand up to their political wing, which is the Labor Party, and help us to resolve some of these issues. This is a serious issue and it is

one about which the people of Queensland should be very concerned. I have corresponded with the Queensland Council of Unions and unions individually. We have been seeking to get their support. If they are fair dinkum about this they will support the release of information and give us some encouragement because it is their members—1,300 of them—whose employment could potentially be saved.

In response I have received a letter from Ron Monaghan, who is the General Secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions. He states—

Thank you for your letter of 7 September 2012 concerning the future of healthcare services in Queensland.

He goes on to raise a number of issues. He states—

The Queensland Council of Unions has, on behalf of its affiliate members, made our opposition to the reduction in employment and services within Queensland Health well known. We remain unconvinced that the cuts were necessary or desirable—

that is their ongoing view—

and the manner in which the change process has been handled by Government—

et cetera. They go on to say—

It may be instructive for you to become familiar with the attempts made by union members and officials to warn the then Government of the risks associated with the payroll system that caused your predecessors so much political damage. These attempts were in fact blocked by senior officials of the Department who dismissed union members' and officials' quite realistic apprehensions as scare mongering.

I would be happy to arrange a briefing for you with officials of the relevant unions who attempted to warn the previous Government of what you have described as the 'payroll disaster'. I make this in an effort to set the record straight and to attempt to avert similar matters being hidden from the Minister in the future.

None the less, despite our obvious disagreement concerning the cuts to employment and services, it is appreciated that you have provided me with your letter. In that regard we also remain committed to working with Government to provide outcomes that are of mutual benefit to union members and the public of Queensland into the future.

It goes on to say, 'Please do not hesitate to contact us.' They are saying they raised concerns. However, we just cannot find them at the moment.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** I for one certainly have not been aware of this prior to just now. It seems quite important that it has been raised.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I actually have copies of it.

**CHAIR:** Is the minister seeking leave to table that letter?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted. Thank you.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** In relation to this letter, which is obviously very important, Mr Ron Monaghan, as general secretary of the Queensland Council of Unions and past president of the Labor Party, obviously tried to amalgamate with other unions to warn the previous government and administration about the hazards of going forward with this payroll system, which obviously has cost several jobs and loss of services throughout the state. With this new information, I move that the committee adjourn so that we can consider a motion to call Mr Monaghan and any other relevant unions to provide evidence to this committee at a subsequent public sitting to be determined by the committee.

**CHAIR:** I will adjourn this hearing. We will reconvene a committee meeting in A35 to deliberate on the matter.

**Proceedings suspended from 1.45 pm to 1.50 pm**

**CHAIR:** I reopen the hearing. I can advise that a quorum was not achieved so we were not able to resolve the matter. I now call the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** In view of your previous answer, Minister, in addition to the unions you outlined, and I guess in addition to the former Labor cabinet, are there any other parties that you are aware of who may have detailed knowledge as to the negotiations with the former government on the payroll issue?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There are obviously a lot of people out there who have detailed knowledge but they are all heading for the hills and do not want to be very open about this. Since I have become minister I have received probably hundreds of letters from people in the community most concerned about this issue. They just cannot believe the significance of maladministration. It is also notable that what we have in the opposition is a party which was covering up in government and is now continuing to cover up in opposition, despite the fact that it talks about openness and transparency. Going to the specifics of the honourable member's question, we received a letter dated 5 September from IBM Australia Ltd. I seek leave to table and distribute the letter.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It certainly raises some issues and is most instructive. It states—

As Minister for Health we appreciate your interest in the Shared Service Solutions Program which IBM entered into with the Queensland Government in 2007. In particular we understand your interest in the difficulties that CorpTech and Queensland Health experienced in administering the project.

As you may be aware, IBM successfully delivered against milestones agreed with the Queensland Government—

I imagine they must have been pretty ripper milestones—

and concluded the implementation of the project on agreed terms. IBM consistently delivered beyond the scope of the contract—

I wonder what a dud contract looks like—

to assist Queensland Health to identify and address concerns with its payroll process. We delivered within the governance structure established by Queensland Health and CorpTech and outlined in the Auditor-General's report.

The letter goes on to indicate that IBM would very much like to meet with me to discuss these issues. I have decided to not accept a meeting at this particular stage. I may do in the future. In order to get some closure and redress, we need to have access to all material. IBM is actually indicating to us that it consistently delivered against the scope of the contract. What sort of a dodgy contract allows something to blow out by 20,000 per cent? I would have thought there would be a whole lot of benchmarks and processes along the way that were not actually met.

In order to meet with them, it is most important for me to have access to all of the information. What has happened? Do we have indemnification of IBM by the previous government in Queensland? Do we have that much contributory negligence that it is impossible to pursue this? Again, IBM has said—

As you may be aware, IBM successfully delivered—

that would be news to 4½ million Queenslanders, I reckon—maybe not so much to the former government—

against milestones agreed with the Queensland Government and concluded the implementation of the project on agreed terms.

I am not sure there are too many businesses or households out there that would be very happy with that. I received that letter from IBM a little over a month ago. It is another reason we need to get to the bottom of this whole thing.

**Mr DAVIES:** Mr Chairman, in light of what the minister is saying—that there is even more information regarding IBM—it now appears that IBM has placed in writing its contention that, basically, it successfully delivered on milestones agreed with the Queensland government. As someone who has come out of the corporate sector and has been involved in rollouts and implementation, I think it is extraordinary—in fact, it is beyond the pale—that it can be said that this payroll system, which so far has cost \$500 million or whatever, has achieved its milestones as agreed. It is just bananas. It still does not even pay people.

**CHAIR:** Are you asking or telling, member for Capalaba? Is there a question there?

**Mr DAVIES:** I am putting something forward. This committee must know what were the agreed terms with the previous Labor government. Taxpayers need this information. We need to ascertain if there is any hope of recovering the money in an effort to save both health jobs and health services. Therefore, I move that this committee adjourn so that we can consider the motion to call on IBM and other relevant contractors, along with the former relevant ministers for health and public works, to provide evidence to this committee at a subsequent hearing.

**CHAIR:** Obviously we cannot move a motion in this forum, but I understand that you want to adjourn to consider that as an item of business?

**Mr DAVIES:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Judging by the amusement to my left and the inability to form a quorum—will the opposition committee members be joining us to form a quorum?

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**CHAIR:** In that case, I will not entertain the adjournment again. But I take on board your sentiment. I understand—

**Mrs MILLER:** Well, you continue with your stunts. The people of Queensland understand that these are stunts.

**Mr DAVIES:** Member for Bundamba, it is not a stunt.

**Mrs MILLER:** These are absolute stunts. You do not want to ask the minister questions. These are stunts.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba! Member for Capalaba!

**Mr DAVIES:** It is not a stunt at all, Jo. Where's transparency—transparent government?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yeah, well, that will come.

**CHAIR:** Member to Capalaba, you will refer to the member by her title. Member for Capalaba, I am not going to entertain an adjournment. It will descend into farce if—

**Mrs MILLER:** Walk out on the parliament again.

**CHAIR:**—non-government committee members do not attend. It is wasting time. We will plough on. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, your capacity to work with unions on fixing the payroll system into the future is bound by a formal heads of agreement between Queensland Health and various unions, is it not?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There was an indication from the previous Premier and also the previous minister for health that there was a heads of agreement with regard to fixing the Health payroll debacle in Queensland, but the interesting thing is that I do not think we have been able to find where such a heads of agreement was actually agreed to, despite the media statement from the Premier on Sunday, 10 July 2011. The Premier is quoted as saying—

The Government and union leaders last night reached agreement in principle to introduce a moratorium on recovering overpayments and strengthen the focus on processes to reimburse underpaid staff.

The press release also states—

Health Minister Geoff Wilson has led a round of discussions this week and final agreement was reached at a meeting convened by the Premier on Saturday afternoon.

I have been briefed that in mid-2011 Queensland Health and all health unions were engaged in negotiations on a framework for ongoing payroll improvement. While a number of key elements of the draft agreement were implemented by Queensland Health, the parties—I reinforce ‘the parties’—did not reach agreement on all elements and the heads of agreement was never signed. So the heads of agreement was actually never, ever signed, despite what we were told by the previous Premier and the previous health minister.

A draft heads of agreement was certainly developed by the parties in mid-2011 with assistance from the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. It contained five key elements: moratorium on recovery of overpayments; commitment to focus on underpayments prior to commencing overpayment recovery; appointment of an external ombudsman to assist in resolution of payroll related matters; provision of additional administrative support for line managers; and pilot of the shift of the cut-off for lodgement of adjustments and continuation of discussions regarding the best way to recover overpayments. In good faith Queensland Health implemented the first four elements of the draft agreement. The parties did not reach agreement on the fifth element and the heads of agreement was never signed. There was no such heads of agreement signed. We have been methodically working our way through this process, which is an absolutely abominable legacy left to us by our predecessors. Again, they are seeking to walk away and hide today.

**Mrs MILLER:** I would just like to place on record that the opposition will not be party to any stunts, in the chair's obvious relish to become a minister. I note that you are the only chair of a committee already in the ‘big green chair’. Minister, I would just like to ask: how many submissions have you taken—

**CHAIR:** As the issue has been raised, I advise the hearing that I have a back issue, so I took the liberty of bringing my own chair from my own office. Thank you very much, member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** And I also have a crook back—I was in a car accident—but I did not do it.

**CHAIR:** And you did not bring a chair.

**Mrs MILLER:** Minister, how many submissions have you taken to cabinet since becoming health minister? How many have you released publicly? Will you allow me as shadow minister for health to view those documents?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member very much for her question—indeed, an honourable member who has again been complicit in the cover-up by her predecessor government with regard to the Health payroll issue in Queensland and the fact that this opposition, despite talking transparency, is not prepared to act transparently.

**Mrs MILLER:** How many? Come on, how many?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Indeed, covering up in government; they are now covering up in opposition. As the honourable member knows—

**Mrs MILLER:** Come on: yes or no.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, the minister is answering the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** As the honourable member knows, and I have elucidated this quite significantly publicly, there are conventions that exist—

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh!

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** However—just listen, honourable member, and I have even said this in forums that you have may have listened to—the parliament has passed a motion that calls on the Leader of the Opposition to show some moral and ethical leadership in releasing crucial information for which there is a public interest—something which they are not prepared to do. I have never advocated the general principle of the release of information that has been taken to cabinet—

**Mrs MILLER:** Poor petal!

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Nor indeed have I advocated a motion in parliament which can be constructed to force the Leader of the Opposition to do that. We have, however, relied upon the moral and ethical leadership which is moribundly absent in those opposite—on that side—to release this information.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you are saying we are immoral? You are saying the three women here are immoral? That is a new low.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Indeed, by way of contrast, as I have also indicated to parliament and publicly on numerous occasions when I sat in the chair where the honourable Leader of the Opposition now sits, I released information at the request of her former leader, Peter Beattie, to assist the state in seeking legal recourse and recovery of funds to which the state should be legally entitled and matters which were contained in cabinet documents and submissions of which I had custodianship as the Leader of the Opposition, as the leader of what was the former government in Queensland on numerous occasions. So there is a precedent there and there is a moral and ethical obligation to do so, I believe. That is all I have ever called upon and it is a reasonable request. It should be released to assist the state, because it is extraordinary—quite extraordinary. But as a general principle, I have never it advocated anywhere, but I have practised what I have preached and I have practised what I have called on the opposition leader to do and the opposition leader has not seen fit to follow.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you. So you confirm that you will not release any of these cabinet submissions that you have taken since you have been minister. Thank you. My question is now to the director-general, Dr Tony O'Connell. Can you confirm that you are the same Dr Tony O'Connell who held the position of director-general and deputy director-general of Queensland Health under the previous government and was part of the executive team responding to issues around the Health payroll?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes, I am.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you. I have a further question to the director-general. As the director-general, have you provided verbal, written or any other information to the minister about the Health payroll and/or associated legal issues regarding the contracts?

**Dr O'Connell:** I have provided reams of information to the current minister regarding payroll as is, of course, appropriate on his assumption of the position. However, the issue with regard to the contracts was not within my purview, because the contract was managed by DPW, clearly, previous to the time that I was director-general.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you. I have a further question to the director-general. Has the minister ever asked you to paraphrase the Mallesons advice as you are clearly able to do under section 4.15.5 of the Queensland Cabinet Handbook?

**Dr O'Connell:** I have roughly paraphrased the advice.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you confirm that you have roughly paraphrased the Mallesons advice to the minister?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes, but, of course, the minister reserved the right to view the actual document itself so that he can draw his own conclusions as to the contents of the document.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have another question to the director-general, now that the truth is coming out. In your substantial experience of government—and I know you have substantial experience in public administration—have you ever known a government entity to commence any legal action based on legal advice that was more than two years old, director-general?

**Dr O'Connell:** I cannot comment on the practice across whole of government. I am not aware—

**Mrs MILLER:** But in your experience.

**Dr O'Connell:** Within my portfolio I am not aware of it, no.

**Mrs MILLER:** So within your portfolio, you would normally request fresh legal advice, would you not?

**Dr O'Connell:** I would normally seek up-to-date advice, but that would depend on what the purpose of the advice was.

**Mrs MILLER:** So have you actually requested fresh legal advice given what you have just said?

**Dr O’Connell:** No, because the purpose that the minister asked me the summary did not relate to an intention to act on fresh legal advice; it was to determine the nature of the previous legal advice.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. My question now is to the minister. Minister, since the opposition leader granted access to the Mallesons advice an associated documents 79 days ago and as now your director-general has admitted that he has paraphrased such advice to you, have you—

**Mr Hathaway** interjected.

**Mrs MILLER:** Chair, these newbies are being very rude over there.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, you will refer to members by their title and you will be respectful.

**Mrs MILLER:** The new MPs.

**CHAIR:** You will be respectful.

**Mrs MILLER:** So will you.

**CHAIR:** As I have been. Is that an imputation on the chair?

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**CHAIR:** I think it was an imputation on the chair.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, it was not. Have you or your office requested the director-general or the cabinet secretary’s office to arrange an examination of the documents?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Quite publicly I have indicated that I want those documents released so that they can be used. This is the whole point. The paraphrasing of documents that could run into many pages—indeed, many hundreds of pages—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** They are there. They are there.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:**—do not contain substantive advice on which we can guide any sort of decision. The reality is that we need all advice. We need the advice which we currently have identified through DPW, of which there are advices which were not taken to cabinet by the previous government and which were not created for that purpose—unlike the ones that were created for that purpose—which are, let us say, very interesting and I will say no more. The three pieces of Mallesons advice and the Solicitor-General’s subsequent advice to that are matters which I can view but I cannot copy, I cannot comment on, I cannot take notes on and, therefore, they are useless to me in being able to inform anyone else, because there has been nothing that I have seen that indicates the substantive nature of that advice, what sort of indemnification there may have been for IBM or, if indeed, it actually existed. All of those sorts of things are very important. Can you imagine what happens if you decide to take a matter to court and then somebody walks out with an indemnity, somebody pops up with something where there has been an agreement on it—regardless of the historical nature of that advice or otherwise? That can completely undermine and cause even further embarrassment in something which has been just an absolute mess from day one.

The only way we can get any sort of substantive advancement on this issue is to take what we know we have, to take what we know has been hidden from us and to then get a contemporary assessment of that in light of the effluxion of time and to see what can be done. I call on honourable members of the Labor Party here to stop playing games with regard to hiding that information.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You are the one—

**Mrs MILLER:** You are the one—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:**—hiding that information and to release that information so it can be properly used to actually assess our chances and to save some of those 1,300-odd jobs that have been lost in Queensland as a consequence of their maladministration in this particular area. That is it. That is why we need that particular information.

**Mrs MILLER:** Bearing in mind what the minister has just said, can I put it to you that you are too lazy to get out of your office in Charlotte Street—

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, that is not parliamentary language. Please withdraw.

**Mrs MILLER:** I withdraw. But you will not walk from the Health building 250 metres up to George Street and—

**CHAIR:** Under the standing orders we do not wave placards or posters in a hearing. Please lower the document.

**Mrs MILLER:** Another 110 metres down the road and go up to the cabinet secretary’s office. You will not do it, will you. I table the document.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I may as well sit in my office if they can supply me with some gaffer tape and I will put it over my mouth, my ears and my eyes, because that is about how useful that is, because I cannot tell anyone, I cannot talk about it and, indeed, I cannot divulge anything of what I am actually told.

**Mrs MILLER:** Seventy-nine days you have had to get there.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I cannot divulge anything. I refuse to be a part of another Labor cover-up in Queensland. That is all they want—another cover-up.

**Mrs MILLER:** Seventy-nine days.

**Mr Davies** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba and member for Capalaba.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I call upon the honourable member for the opposition here today to do as I did with Premier Peter Beattie and release information to the Crown Solicitor and to the Premier so it can be used fulsomely and properly in the prosecution of matters in the interests of the state. To date, what has been released to me, I cannot even get crown law advice on, because the Crown Solicitor cannot even refer to that matter when I have asked for an update. I have crown law advice where I have given him the material, which I have uncovered in DPW—significant amounts of previous legal advice of which he can advise me on in a contemporary legal fashion and he has said in that legal advice that he is unable to make any reference or provide me with any advice whatsoever on the four pieces of advice which were taken to cabinet or CBRC by the previous government and in order to have it in context and to assess our success we need that information.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the minister. Minister, why will you not go up to the cabinet secretary's office and view these documents? Do you not think you have the comprehension to be able to read them, given that you are allowed to go there with the Crown Solicitor?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I think this question has been asked and answered.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, no, it has not.

**CHAIR:** If the minister would to go over that answer—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have said it over and over today. I will sit here until six o'clock and say it over and over, Mr Chairman, if you wish—and I know there are probably rules about repetition. As I have indicated to the honourable member before, I refuse to be part of another Labor cover-up. Going up to view documentation of which you are unable to tell anyone about, of which you are unable take notes of, of which you are unable to copy, is just an absolutely ridiculous, ludicrous proposition, because it does nothing to assist, particularly when you are dealing with copious quantities of documents over a short period of time—hundreds of pages which are completely useless to you. Even if you had a photographic memory it is of no use to anyone.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You cannot read it. You cannot go and read it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** We have seen a little merry dance from the Leader of the Opposition who first of all said this information was released, that it was actually in my department waiting for me. Well, I cannot get access to it because it pertains to advice to a previous government. Then the Leader of the Opposition said, 'We will release this information.' Then we find out that the information was released with a very, very serious caveat. That caveat was you cannot copy it, you cannot talk about it and you cannot take notes on it. It is absolutely ridiculous. Why will she not do the same thing that I did with Peter Beattie in Queensland? Stop this little merry game of cover-up and release the information so it can be used appropriately and properly to inform the state as to the success of any legal challenge.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** And you are refusing to go and see it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** You are refusing to release it.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is there for you to see and you refuse to go and see it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** And do what with it?

**Mrs MILLER:** 79 days.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Read it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Imagine if I had my time over again and I went back to when Peter Beattie wrote to me on at least three occasions saying, 'Will you release this?', and I said, 'No, Premier. You can come along and you can sit there, you can have a look at it. You cannot take notes, you cannot copy it in any way whatsoever and you cannot tell anyone so you might as well stay in your office and not even bother about it.' Imagine the indignation of the members opposite if I had done that. They would have been running around the place. They would have been carrying on unbelievably. They might have even phoned up a few crocodiles to see if they could get some tears off them. You would never know what they would be capable of. Imagine it in reverse.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the Director-General. Dr O'Connell, have you ever advised the minister to seek fresh legal advice in relation to the payroll issue?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, I have never advised the minister to seek fresh legal advice. No.

**Mrs MILLER:** But you have paraphrased the documentation, so why have you not advised him to do that?

**Dr O'Connell:** The purpose of the minister reviewing the previous advice was to ascertain whether there was any party to blame in any of the processes which occurred and that would not be achieved by receiving fresh legal advice.

**Mrs MILLER:** Have you encouraged the minister to actually go to the cabinet secretariat and view these documents so that you and him could speak openly about the legal issues to resolve these matters?

**Dr O'Connell:** The minister is constrained in that he would not be able to come back and talk to me about it.

**Mrs MILLER:** But the Crown Solicitor can. You can talk to him because you have already said that you have paraphrased it and you have not advised him to receive fresh legal advice. As Director-General do you not think that it is odd that you have a minister who is so concerned about the payroll issue and you are in charge of the department and you would not actually advise him to seek fresh legal advice?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, I do not think it is unusual because, as I said, what is required is for him to have access to the previous advice to judge whether the previous advice helps. Subsequent advice would be constrained because it would not have access to cabinet in confidence matters and so would not be helpful.

**Mrs MILLER:** Have you discussed these matters with the Attorney-General?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Only in a broad context. The Attorney-General is in exactly the same area where we are and that is that if he were to want to view the advice—well, the Leader of the Opposition would actually have to allow him to view the advice. Maybe she might be more fulsome and let him actually talk about it and take notes and copy it. But, no, only in general terms. We are all well aware of the restrictions that exist on it and we are all very much aware of this unbelievably genetic desire of those members opposite in the Labor Party to keep covering up this matter because of the level of embarrassment that they are suffering over this. One would think the fact that we are looking at this year a great big budget black hole of \$150 million, potentially offset by \$20 million in recovery and 1,300 odd jobs, would be enough to cause them a pang of conscience but obviously it does not.

**Mrs MILLER:** Chair, I have another question.

**CHAIR:** I am going to move to the member for Capalaba now.

**Mrs MILLER:** Can I just ask—

**Mr DAVIES:** I am asking the question, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Member for Capalaba, let me chair.

**Mr DAVIES:** My question is to the minister. Minister, I note that on page 38 of the SDS it says that this month you are actually moving on the issue of changing the pay date as part of the payroll fix. Has this been raised as a strategy previously?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Obviously, through you, Mr Chairman, there are a whole range of potential fixes to the Health payroll in Queensland. There are a number of things that cause great compromise and concern in running a decent Health payroll system. One of them, of course, is the complexity of the awards that we have in Queensland. We have about 4,500 award variations resulting in a multiplicity of pay combinations—indeed, 24,000 of those. A whole range of issues were not properly considered when the previous administration dreamed up this little Frankenstein gift that they managed to give to us. But as part of the ongoing fix it was actually recommended to us by a number of different sources. One of those came through agreement within the process of the unions working with the government to actually address these sorts of things. We have decided that the most appropriate way of dealing with these things is to systematically work through a number of issues. One was to lift the moratorium which was quite clearly continuing to compromise the issue of the ongoing bleed, \$1.7 million down to \$1.3 million, and, of course, the other issue was making sure that the shifting of pay date, which has been generally agreed—indeed, if you look at the nurses union they have agreed with us and some others have agreed through that particular process to achieve this. Last night was the first night where we are in the new regime where there is no pay but a pay date loan. The 24th of this month will be the first new pay date under the separation which is seven days from the old date. We believe that that will go a long way to actually stifling some of the bleed.

On 28 November there was some advice that this was going to be a very complex issue. There was a brief which had gone through to the Premier and to the Treasurer raising some issues about that. That is in the previous administration. We decided that the best thing to do was to go ahead and actually shift this because it brings about some sort of normalisation of the system.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** The member for Inala will be taking these questions.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, what is tuberculosis?

**CHAIR:** Is it a budget related question?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, it is.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is a serious respiratory disease. I think all should know that. It has certainly been a serious disease which has caused a great degree of affliction for many people worldwide over such a long period of time. It is a disease, in the context of the modern western world, which is far less than what it used to be years ago but it is still a significant disease in many other parts throughout the world and it is a disease that we take very seriously. Indeed, Australia has some very, very good programs and very good processes to actually deal with the identification and treatment of tuberculosis. If the honourable Leader of the Opposition is going towards the issue of the TB centre in Queensland I can assure the honourable Leader of the Opposition that we are going to continue to have the best quality care for people who have been identified with tuberculosis in this state. Indeed, the model of ensuring the operational side of tuberculosis is dealt with in the hospital and health services is a model which is enjoyed in Victoria and certainly the New South Wales administration is going towards a very similar model to where we are moving after making some initial changes.

Decentralisation of tuberculosis treatment and tracing is something which is quite unremarkable in Queensland. If you look at what they have been doing in Cairns for years in treating tuberculosis it proves that the AHSs have the level of competency to be able to do that.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** From 2004 onwards has the rate of tuberculosis in Queensland patients been increasing or decreasing?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I would be more than happy to ask Dr Michael Cleary or a chief health officer to give some specific advice on that. As I understand it, the rates of tuberculosis in Australia are extremely low in comparison to anywhere else in the rest of the world and Queensland's rate of tuberculosis compares very, very favourably with the rest of the country. There will be absolutely no compromising of that with regard to the changes which are being made.

**Dr Cleary:** In terms of the rates of tuberculosis within Queensland, that has varied over recent years. Certainly the number of people from Papua New Guinea who present to Queensland Health facilities has been a significant load on our services, but the rates over the last four or five years for Queensland residents has varied from about 110 through to about 140, 150 per year. In terms of those from overseas, it has varied from around 33 to 50 per year.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I table, from the Queensland government website, a table that actually highlights that the TB incidence rate in Queensland has been increasing from 2004 to 2011. It is now actually quite significant.

**CHAIR:** Leave has been requested. Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I think you will agree that it is a very serious issue. I cannot quite comprehend why you as minister have decided to close the Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre. Will you please explain to the committee why you took this decision? What consultation was undertaken?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am struggling to understand the context of the honourable Leader of the Opposition's question. The honourable Leader of the Opposition is running around and saying that things are going up but we have to preserve the status quo. I am wondering what is the logic of the honourable Leader of the Opposition's question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can you please explain why you have disbanded the central control centre for tuberculosis in this state? I, along with many other Queenslanders, believe this is a very important issue.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is a very important issue.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I do not think you should dismiss it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is a very, very important issue. No-one has actually argued against the importance of the issue. We just have some variance over the best way to address the issue. Indeed, what we have here is an increase in rates based on the figures that the honourable Leader of the Opposition has put forward, nevertheless arguing for the status quo in the way we respond to it. We have taken a decision that the role of a system manager under the new health arrangement is to ensure proper clinical oversight and standards which we will be doing with the retention of a very, very sound and tight unit within the system manager and also a significant TB control unit which will be based in metro south. Indeed, we will be doing a range of things that were not done under the previous system. One was to ensure that we had an epidemiologist who could be looking at these issues so that we can be tracing and tracking what is happening to review our models of care. Rather than play politics as the honourable Leader of the Opposition is choosing to do—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am not playing politics. This is a serious issue, unlike your political stunt earlier today.

**CHAIR:** Order! The minister is answering.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I will give something by contrast. A piece of advice that went to the previous government in Queensland was to close the tuberculosis treatment facilities in the Torres Strait. That was the advice that went to the previous government in Queensland. Rather than me coming in and overturning that, I decided to adopt that, because it was based on best evidence. The best evidence is that we need to be able to better treat people and control that treatment regime.

By looking at this, I suspect that some of this could be at least contributed to by what we are seeing happening through the Torres Strait with the treatment regime that existed and the inability to hold and contain Papua New Guinean nationals with multidrug resistant strains of tuberculosis. They would be half treated and then would go back home. That could be part of the contributing factors. The decision was made to close that. It has recently been supported by Senator Jan McLucas. We need a treatment strategy for tuberculosis in Queensland that allows us to protect our borders to ensure that New Guineans with serious tuberculosis and multidrug resistant strains of it are treated in their own country. Obviously, through AusAID and the Department of Foreign Affairs that is now happening. It is the right policy decision. We believe our policy decision, which is a very tight clinically focused unit to give the best results in the system manager, working with a very streamlined focus tuberculosis treatment facility at Metro South, is the best way of dealing with that. I am more than happy to give some more information. It is not the catastrophe that the Leader of the Opposition is seeking to address.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, in your statement you just mentioned that you were provided with expert advice in relation to the closure of the Queensland Tuberculosis Control Centre. Will you table that expert advice for the committee?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I was provided with absolutely no advice to the contrary that this was the right decision. Indeed, I am happy to let Dr Michael Cleary—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Will you table the expert advice you received in relation to the closure of the Tuberculosis Control Centre?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I was just saying to the honourable Leader of the Opposition that there is no information which I am aware of that has come to me that indicates that the decision to actually devolve the function from the system manager to an HHS comprises public safety in any way.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Who made the decision, Minister? Did you make the decision to close the centre?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I made the decision based on consultation and advice from within Queensland Health.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can you please detail the consultation and the advice that was provided to you?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The advice to me was that under a system manager role, which sees the operation and service delivery side of things such as tuberculosis, it should be devolved to hospital and health services which competently can administer that. That applies based on a template in other places around Queensland where many of our HHSs or districts, as they were known then, were competently delivering this over a period. Further—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So you will not provide that advice?

**CHAIR:** Order, member for Inala.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Further, following the concerns that had been raised by the likes of the AMAQ and the Queensland Nurses Union in discussion, I said that I am very happy to have a look at some of these issues. I think we have come up with a very good solution that actually addresses any of the issues that people have raised. But there is no advice that I am aware of that says that patient safety would be compromised by this. Maybe Dr Cleary might like to add to that?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I have another question, actually.

**CHAIR:** Dr Cleary, did you want to finish the first answer and then we can move on to the next question?

**Dr Cleary:** I have some general comments in relation to this matter. Firstly, there will be no reduction in front-line services associated with the treatment of tuberculosis. The claims that the closure of the dedicated TB Control Centre will have a negative impact on health are wrong. The TB Control Centre was previously part of the Chief Health Officer's division within Queensland Health, but in line with national health reform and the overriding principle that front-line services are best delivered by local managers and local boards, the clinical component of that service is being transitioned to a hospital and health service.

Like other forms of infectious diseases, tuberculosis patients receive treatment from clinicians at their local facilities. This already happens and happens very effectively in North Queensland based out of Cairns, Townsville and Rockhampton and Toowoomba. The department has taken into account, in considering the arrangements for TB, the feedback that we have received from various groups such as the Australian Medical Association and staff within health services.

What has now been proposed is that the TB service and 27.3 FTEs will transfer to the Metro South Hospital and Health Service and they will be responsible for providing, if you like, the front-line service. The corporate office will retain a small group of five FTEs to provide the over-arching oversight and management. That will include an epidemiologist to provide a high level of scrutiny in this area. The minister has already mentioned that. The proposal is also for the corporate office to enlist the assistance of the Metro South Hospital and Health Service to provide about 0.4 of an FTE specialist to assist in that arrangement. In terms of the support, the details of the transition arrangements are currently being worked through by corporate office and the hospital and health service.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, why was there a shortage of TB vaccinations for new infants at the PA Hospital between June and September this year and did it have anything to do with job cuts?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am not aware of that. I am happy for someone else to answer.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Is the CEO of the Metro South Hospital and Health Service Board available. He might know?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** That is Dr Richard Ashby.

**Dr Ashby:** I am the Executive Director of the Metro South Hospital and Health Service and, at the time in question, I was the Executive Director of the PA Hospital. The PA Hospital per se does not have infants.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So there was no shortage of TB vaccinations during June and September?

**Dr Ashby:** I am sorry; the question related to the PA Hospital?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** For the region.

**Dr Ashby:** I am not aware of any shortage. We would need to take that on notice to determine.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Can we will take that on notice, thank you, Chair?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I have one final question on tuberculosis. Minister, does Queensland Health have a statewide strategy to prevent an outbreak of the drug resistant TB in Queensland, particularly for Cape York and Torres Strait areas?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Once again, I am very happy to let our expert clinicians comment on the specifics of that. I will say that we are working properly in line with what the World Health Organisation delegated, through the federal government, to actually quarantine and protect Queensland from multidrug resistant strains of tuberculosis. Indeed, the way we used to deal with this, and it would have been the advice to the previous government, was that it was not delivering the best health outcomes for Queenslanders or, indeed, the people we were treating.

One of the best ways that we could deal with some of this was to close those two facilities, which was recommended to us, in the Torres Strait, which we have done, to make sure that people are actually treated in their own home environment, which is Papua New Guinea. That puts up a firewall, hopefully, around us. You can never guarantee that somebody with a strain will not come in and have to be treated at one of our facilities. Indeed, we have been trying to get some further resources from the Commonwealth. In the past, one of our real challenges in the cape and across the Torres Strait has been getting the Commonwealth government to meet its particular obligations. We believe we are about \$20 million short if you look at the PNG nationals that we treat in that particular part of the word. Recently we received \$8 million, thanks to the good efforts of Dr Michael Cleary.

Yes, we do take the issue of multidrug resistant tuberculosis very, very seriously, both from the issue of identification and the treatment and tracing of those people. As I understand it, we do have a very serious issue with some of these multidrug resistant strains, which is made worse through very inefficient, ineffective treatment regimes, some of which were conducted previously on our own soil through the Torres Strait. Dr Cleary might want to mention the specifics.

**Dr Cleary:** If I could refer to a draft report that I have seen recently from Dr McBryde from Melbourne, who is a specialist in both infectious disease and epidemiology. In September of this year, she undertook a risk assessment of tuberculosis in the western province of Papua New Guinea. I will quote from that report. She commented that—

Closing Saibai and Boigu TB services is likely to (A) reduce the risk of multiple drug resistant TB transmission to Australian residents by reducing the number of PNG nationals seeking healthcare in Australia; and (B) reducing the risk of extreme drug resistant TB to PNG residents by reducing access to second-line agents outside a control program.

That is a recent review. I think it indicates that the decision to discontinue those clinics in Saibai and Boigu was appropriate and it has been validated by an independent external party.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chairman, I have an answer for the honourable Leader of the Opposition with regards to the vaccine. I understand that there was a problem nationally with the vaccine. It was recalled. It is now available again. Further on the issue of the new treatment regime, which might give us some better outcomes, I refer to Senator Jan McLucas's recent inspection of a TB centre on Daru. She said that, basically, a total of 92 patients have been transferred from Queensland to PNG health services. Of those, 65 patients have completed their treatment and 27 continue their treatment. Senator McLucas commented on the significant improvement in patient outcomes, with the mortality of patients suffering from TB falling from 25 per cent to just under five per cent in a year. That is commonsense stuff that we have been doing and that is transitioned across both governments.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mrs MILLER:** Minister, can you explain the basis for a forensic order?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** In Queensland, we are fortunate to have a regime that deals with people who are mentally ill that is, in some cases, different to the way that it is done in the rest of Australia. In other places, the normal criminal court deals with the issue of a person's soundness of mind. In Queensland, over a significant period—I think going back to the 1980s—we have had a process that has seen people who have serious mental illness and who have committed a crime treated differently. That involves the Queensland Mental Health Court, where a declaration is made, as I understand it and I am happy to have any further updates on that. The state of that person as they progress through their treatment is overseen by the Queensland Mental Health Review Tribunal.

Having said that, we do have some issues with regards to mental health patients, those who are under forensic orders in this state. We are dealing generally with people who have offended at a very high level but are mentally unwell; indeed, they are unsound. Obviously, they are observed and, hopefully, treated in a way that will assist them to get better while ensuring that that is done in a very supervised way and that the community is protected along the way.

**Mrs MILLER:** Minister, can you advise how many staff, and with what specialist skills and on what pay grades, are required to manage a mental health patient on a forensic order?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am happy to defer to somebody who has more detail with regards to the specifics of that question. I would imagine that there could be some specific degree of variation, because some people may have an inherent level of greater violence than others. They might require a greater degree of supervision.

The most important thing is to ensure that they are appropriately secured if they need to be secured or appropriately observed if they need to be observed. We would not want to see the ridiculousness of what we saw happen under the previous regime in Queensland where somebody who was under care in the community was not under care in the community due to a union dispute and popped up somewhere else. It was costing us \$1.2 million in an environment where we were not prepared to deal with that particular person. I would imagine that there would be some degree of variation. The important thing is to ensure that we have the best possible environment for people to be secured and treated in and that the community is also protected. I would imagine that would be done on a case-by-case basis. If any of our officers would like to give more specifics on that, I would be more than happy for them to do it.

**Mrs MILLER:** Can you advise what the obligations of a designated person are in relation to confidentiality under section 142(1) of part 7 of the Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Probably not off the top of my head. I would imagine if I asked the honourable member about the next section after that in the act, she probably would not be able to advise me either.

**Mrs MILLER:** I will tell you for your information.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** If she wants to assist along the way—

**Mrs MILLER:** I am happy to assist. The section states—

A designated person must not disclose, directly or indirectly, confidential information to another person unless the disclosure is required or permitted under this Act.

Maximum penalty—100 penalty units.

My question now is to the director-general, Dr Tony O'Connell. Director-General, did you provide the minister or his office with a briefing note or any other information detailing the care of a female patient at the Park on a forensic order?

**CHAIR:** I am just mindful we are getting into a grey area.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, it is not. It is straight up.

**CHAIR:** Just be mindful of where we are at.

**Dr O'Connell:** I cannot remember off hand what briefs I have provided the minister in that regard. I can get back to you on the nature of those.

**Mrs MILLER:** Would you please take that on notice. Would you be aware that a document that was provided to the *Courier-Mail* would in fact be in breach of section 142 of the act?

**Dr O'Connell:** I would need to have the act in front of me. The act has hundreds of sections. I would need to have the act in front of me to advise you on that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, it is in fact a criminal offence. Will you be undertaking an investigation to identify who may have committed such an offence? Do you intend to prosecute the offender?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, can I ask the relevance to the budget in this line of questioning?

**Mrs MILLER:** Budget statement No. 2 page 91.

**CHAIR:** And what does it say?

**Mrs MILLER:** It says that the Health budget is \$11 billion.

**CHAIR:** But where does that reference this particular line of questioning?

**Mrs MILLER:** Funding has to be allocated to investigate breaches of any act, including all of those that you administer. Therefore, I am asking you, Director-General, have you undertaken an investigation or do you intend to undertake an investigation to identify the person or persons who may have committed such an offence? Will you be seeking, as you are required to under this legislation, to prosecute the offender?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I suspect you might have even found someone guilty.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am asking the director-general.

**Dr O'Connell:** I always intend to enact all of my powers in that regard in upholding the acts of parliament that are relevant to my portfolio. Yes, I would.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you will undertake an investigation in relation to the matter?

**Dr O'Connell:** If there is a matter which requires investigation, yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Well it clearly does because it is a breach of section 142 of the act. So you have not instigated an investigation already?

**Dr O'Connell:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** My other question is to the director-general. How can you ensure that every patient who presents to a Queensland Health facility will not have their confidential medical information published either in the *Courier-Mail* or in any local newspaper across the state or splashed across television screens, because patients are not actors for this government?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** What about confidential contracts?

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-general, how can you ensure that patients' confidential information will not be published in newspapers or splashed across TV screens for the benefit of this LNP government, because patients are not actors and they are entitled to confidentiality?

**Dr O'Connell:** Patient confidentiality is respected in the activities of all of the staff if they are following the code of conduct, which they are all exposed to when they join Queensland Health. There are powers that I have under the act to disclose patient information if it is considered to be of greater benefit to the people of Queensland overall than the particular issue of the privacy of the individual patient. So I do have some exceptions to that overarching confidentiality provision which is in the act. If any officer clearly breach that element of the act then I would be keen to pursue that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-general, what if it is the minister or the minister's office that has breached the appropriate legislation?

**Dr O'Connell:** I would have to seek—

**Mrs MILLER:** Would you refer it to the CMC or would you go to your ethical standards unit within the department?

**Dr O'Connell:** I would seek advice from the ethical standards unit on whether the minister was appropriate in doing that if that was the case.

**Mrs MILLER:** Or his office or any other officers?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** And internally officers of your department?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you.

**Mr TROUT:** Getting back to the business of government, on page 38 of the SDS I note the reference to the overpayment recovery strategy involving 49,040 staff. Can you advise the committee on how much money has been recovered since you raised the moratorium on overpayments?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much to the honourable member for Barron River for the question. As I have indicated before, this has been an ongoing issue. It is interesting that the super sleuths in the Labor Party have not been able to deal with this or even follow it. We have gone about this process deliberately and methodologically from day one. One step was to lift the moratorium that the previous Labor government put in place which saw the problem get worse not better. They had resignations and retirements from people who actually walked out the doors with tens of thousands of dollars as part of severance payments or entitlements that were not recovered and which we are still chasing. The other step was to cease the process of historical claims in Queensland which could see people actually make claims going back six years. Some of those people could not substantiate that based on time sheets and you would have to rely upon statutory declarations. But, again, that was the maladministration of the previous government in Queensland.

There is the ongoing issue of overpayments. In March 2012 it amounted to approximately \$87.8 million. The outstanding balance at 30 June this year was \$93.5 million. So that is a significant amount. It was actually worsening to the extent of about \$1.7 million per fortnight but we have put processes in place which has reduced that to around \$1.3 million. We believe that with the separation pay date we are actually going to be able to reduce that even further.

Some \$23.5 million of the outstanding money is owed by staff who no longer work for Queensland Health—they walked out the door. I don't know where the super sleuths in the Labor Party were when we needed their assistance with regard to dealing with these sorts of issues, but they were nowhere to be seen other than bludgeoning the poor suffering employees of Queensland Health and the taxpayers of this state.

We are certainly going through a process of recovering this money. This is going to be a long and arduous process. Between 1 July and 23 September Queensland Health established or is in the process of establishing 3,483 repayment agreements valued at \$9.1 million. Between 1 July 2012 and 23 September 2012 Queensland Health has received \$4.1 million in actual repayments. We have an ongoing issue which we continue to methodically work through. In June 2012, Queensland Health notified 49,040 current and former staff of their overpayment position as at 13 May 2012 and advised the department intended to seek repayment. We are actually now working through the process of recovery. How much we ultimately get back is yet to be seen.

**Mr TROUT:** Further to that question. Can you advise the committee of the top 10 amounts for which recovery has been arranged and the top 10 amounts still outstanding?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes. We have had some quite extraordinary amounts which had been overpaid and some quite extraordinary amounts which are outstanding. How any government could actually get us into this sort of dilemma to start with and actually conceive this little Frankenstein which continues to gobble up taxpayers resources and cost jobs in Queensland is completely unconscionable.

To give you an indication, the top 10 outstanding amounts which we have actually recovered amounted to \$591,639.28. The most outstanding amount was \$221,731.80 for a person who worked within the system in the managerial and clerical area. They go down to \$65,000, \$62,000, \$55,000, \$38,000, \$32,000, \$30,000, \$29,000, \$29,000 and \$26,000. With regard to outstanding overpayments which we are continuing to chase, for the top 10 outstanding ones the original amount was of the order of \$956,000 or almost \$957,000, of which the current amount outstanding is \$953,000. There has been a slight adjustment. That may have been some sort of correction or agreed amount. The highest amount that is outstanding is \$168,723.31. The next one is \$125,000, \$105,000, \$91,000, \$90,000, \$83,000, \$80,000, \$71,000, \$70,000 and \$67,000. This has been an extraordinary little gift by our predecessors who want to continue to covering it up.

**Mrs MILLER:** I wish to table the document that says 'Queensland spends \$1.2 million a year on one mental health patient' and I look forward to the outcome of the director-general's investigation.

**CHAIR:** In light of the time the committee will now break for afternoon tea.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.58 pm to 3.15 pm**

 **CHAIR:** The committee will now continue its examination of the portfolio of the Minister for Health including Queensland Health and the hospital and health services. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I note that on page 2 of the SDS it states \$283 million is expected to be saved over the next four years on consultancies, travel and advertising. Minister, are there any consultancy agreements having effect in 2012-13 which were commissioned by the previous government?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Bulimba. When we came to government in Queensland we had a very serious fiscal repair task and obviously we had to make sure that we focused on what the core responsibilities were for Queensland Health, and that is to ensure we had an efficient, effective administration/system manager which was supporting the front line and also to make

sure that we internally addressed and made changes to a whole range of things which had just been allowed to grow up by osmosis and expand over a period of time. Advertising was one of the areas we had a look at. The areas of travel and also consultancies are very much a part of the remit to address these particular issues. It is true that there has been significant expenditure on consultancy within Queensland Health—I might touch on some of those figures in a moment—and across government there is an expectation from the Premier and the Treasurer that we move to rein in some of these expenditures.

Consultancy expenditure for 2011-12 was \$26.7 million compared to \$19.4 million in 2010-11. That was an increase of 35 per cent. Since 1 July 2010 to May 2012 Queensland Health has entered into 241 consultancies with the agreed value of \$57.8 million and, as at May 2012, there were 121 consultancy agreements outstanding to the value of \$23.4 million. That is 40 per cent of the agreed total value. Consultancy agreements may cover a number of financial years and total expenditure may not reach the agreed value. The top five of the outstanding consultancy agreements account for \$17 million of the 73 per cent. As of 30 June 2012, major consultancies include \$7.123 million for clinical services redesign; \$6.72 million for Queensland Health national health reform; \$3.179 million for payroll related projects; \$2.41 million for e-health change and strategic business management; and \$1.865 million for upgrade of the department's finance system, otherwise known as PHEMIS.

The national health reform required specialist knowledge with professional and industry expertise requiring services of a number of consultants. Consultants were employed following a review of the availability of suitable internal staff and where it was considered to be cost-effective. Activities undertaken by consultants include advice on developing health service strategies and capability assessments, advice on the new national health reform, payroll improvements and also assistance with developing business strategy and commercial advice.

In addition, \$6.412 million of consultancy expenditure has been capitalised during 2011-12, of which \$4.9 million relates to the Sunshine Coast University Hospital project. For the period 24 March 2012 to 30 June expenditure on consultancies was \$0.598 million. This was a reduction of 75.2 per cent compared to the same period in 2010-11 which aligned with the new government's commitment to reduce expenditure on consultancies. A target of 20 per cent reduction has been established also for 2012-13. If the committee wants some more details on other specifics, I would be happy to provide them.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** I have two questions for you, Minister. Minister, I note that since the budget was released the QNU have now lodged a claim for their meal times to be paid at a higher SDS. Was funding for this claim covered in the enterprise agreements referred to on page 36 of the SDS? Are there any other outstanding disputes that you are aware of?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Capalaba for the question. With regard to the QNU, no, that was not factored into the EB arrangement which we reached with the Queensland Nurses Union within a couple of weeks of coming to office which effectively saw the Queensland Nurses Union negotiate a good deal on behalf of nurses and midwives in Queensland—about 3.16 per cent was the increase; 2.5 per cent of that was new funding from Treasury and indeed the other 0.66 per cent came through productivity improvements. I would like to commend the Nurses Union for the nature of those particular negotiations around productivity improvements—some of the serious redesign stuff that we need to do.

Specifically with regard to ongoing disputes, there are ongoing disputes in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission for over 750 employees. Queensland Health employs over 10,000 staff classified as health practitioners, so there are health practitioner disputes. Individual health practitioners can lodge a reclassification dispute with no time limit. QIRC is currently hearing reclassification disputes, and 32 individual disputes have been lodged as at 18 September 2012. Unions and Queensland Health disagree as to the operative date backpay for QIRC decisions. Queensland Health has submitted operative date from decisions of QIRC to reclassify and opposes any backpay arrangements. Unions have submitted operative date as of 1 September 2007, which is five years of backpay which would be quite significant.

The health practitioners certified agreement No. 1 of 2008 was certified on 3 January 2008. The subsequent health practitioners certified agreement No. 2 of 2011 was certified on 3 November 2011. The HPEB 1 provided for the evaluation of the potential reclassification process for all 10,000 health practitioners. It has also provided for the appeal of outcomes—1,027 health practitioners accessed the appeal process; 779 health practitioners were unsuccessful in their appeals. HPEB 2 continues provisions of HPEB 1 which allows for the subsequent dispute of the evaluation outcome. As a worst-case scenario, 779 health practitioners could access a dispute in the QIRC. There is no ability to foresee the numbers of health practitioners who will lodge a dispute until they lodge in the QIRC. Each dispute is treated on an individual, not collective, basis. Of course it is very difficult to speculate on what the cost of something like that may be because we do not know what the deliberative outcome is going to be with regard to the QIRC, and we will have to deal with that if it comes about.

**Mr DAVIES:** Minister, once again I would like draw your attention to page 38 of the SDS which refers to the Health payroll debacle left by Labor. Given Labor MPs on this committee have today blocked calling union bosses to appear to give evidence they claim to have—

**Mrs MILLER:** I raise a point of order.

**CHAIR:** Member for Capalaba, I will take a point of order.

**Mrs MILLER:** The assertion of the member for Capalaba is untrue and I ask it to be withdrawn.

**CHAIR:** I do not believe that is a point of order.

**Mrs MILLER:** It is.

**CHAIR:** But I will ask the member for Capalaba to be more delicate in the framing of his question.

**Mr DAVIES:** We claim that they blocked the IBM from being called today to give evidence. Does this mean the actions of Labor MPs today has—

**Mrs MILLER:** I raise a point of order.

**CHAIR:** I will take the point of order.

**Mrs MILLER:** My point of order is that I believe that what he said is untrue and I ask him to withdraw unreservedly.

**CHAIR:** No. I do not believe there is a point of order there. I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** Does this mean the actions of Labor MPs today have cemented and are complicit in approximately 1,300 job losses in Queensland Health today?

**Mrs MILLER:** Nice try.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much. We have seen a whole new phase with regard to the former government in Queensland and their lack of transparency and openness when it comes to something which is of fundamental concern and front of mind for many people in Queensland. Indeed it is something which was attributed by the review committee that looked at the Labor Party's disastrous election outcome as a major factor in their election loss. What we saw was a lack of due diligence, a lack of administration, a lack of openness and a lack of engagement with the concerns of people.

Indeed today we have seen the opposition go from active resistance to passive resistance, where by refusing to participate in something which is so important to the people of Queensland they are actually blocking access to critical information which may assist us in being able to bring this whole sordid mess to some sort of reasonable outcome, not only to get some of this money back for the people of Queensland, to get some disclosure around it, to see what little dirty deals have been done—

**Mrs MILLER:** You'd know about that.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:**—but also to protect those jobs which are going to be lost that are directly attributable to the Health payroll in Queensland. Mr Chairman, the only way we would be able to get access to that is if we can get a fulsome disclosure by the honourable members opposite. Of course we now know that we have members of the union movement who say they raised concerns but have not actually been engaged in putting pressure on their political masters in the Labor Party since the election to release that information that could ironically save up to 1,300 jobs or more which are directly attributable to the payroll debacle in Queensland. We have the ongoing problem next year. But also IBM itself is now saying that they met all of their benchmarks. If you signed a building contract like that, if you signed an insurance contract like that, if you signed any other contract like that, would you be happy if you had such dodgy benchmarks, such dodgy wording in your contract, whatever it may have been?

Yes, I think it is fair to say that the opportunity to actually save those jobs, the opportunity to be able to get some sort of redress, is now slipping further and further away because of the active come passive resistance of the Labor Party on this committee who is refusing to put its money where its mouth is to not only apologise but also to release information which is crucial for the recovery of money which might be able to keep more people employed. Let it be on their heads when those jobs go because it will be their fault and no-one else's.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a question to the director-general, Dr Tony O'Connell. Director-General, have you been requested by the minister or his office or anyone else in government to ensure that the assistant minister does not deal with the delivery of the Queensland Children's Hospital and related health services across South-East Queensland? I refer to SDS page 8.

**Dr O'Connell:** No, I have not.

**Mrs MILLER:** You have not been directed at all?

**Dr O'Connell:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, in relation to SDS page 8 as well, are you aware of the assistant minister's antagonism towards the new Queensland Children's Hospital and with his obvious conflict of interest—

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, be careful. You are impugning one of our members.

**Mrs MILLER:**—in relation to SDS page 8?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, you are impugning a member.

**Mrs MILLER:** These are lawful proceedings of the estimates committee. I am asking the—

**CHAIR:** It is not lawful proceedings to impugn members of parliament.

**Mrs MILLER:**—director-general in accordance with the standing orders. Director-General?

**Dr O'Connell:** Mr Chair, should I answer that question?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, Director-General, did you want to answer the question? I think the member actually impugned a member of parliament and I have not heard a retraction yet—

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**CHAIR:**—in her assertions about the assistant minister. So I would like that to be withdrawn and then I might allow her to rephrase the question.

**Mrs MILLER:** No members of this committee except yourself seem to be concerned.

**CHAIR:** As the chair, it is my responsibility to have that concern.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. I withdraw.

**Mr TROUT:** Hypocrisy.

**CHAIR:** Order. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** They are getting toey, aren't they? Director-General, given the assistant minister's known antagonism towards the new Queensland Children's Hospital and also the fact that he never turned up to the opening of the Children's Hospital part in his own electorate which was at the Prince Charles Hospital, even though he could turn up later that day to his farewell celebration, has there been a directive again to ensure that the assistant minister is not involved in the delivery and even the expansion of the children's health services in South-East Queensland?

**CHAIR:** I am going to have to rule that question out of order. It has no relevance to the budget.

**Mrs MILLER:** It does. It is on page 8 of the SDS—

**CHAIR:** It has no relevance to the budget.

**Mrs MILLER:**—which includes the expenditure of capital budgeting in relation to the new hospital—

**CHAIR:** It has no relevance to a member of parliament's attendance to an opening ceremony.

**Mrs MILLER:**—as well as the delivery of the service, and he is the Assistant Minister for Health. Director-General?

**CHAIR:** Would the minister like to answer the question?

**Mrs MILLER:** I am referring it to the director-general, as I am able to do under the standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Then I will rule the question out of order. Do you have another question, member for Bundamba?

**Mrs MILLER:** I would like to call the Clerk. I will seek advice from the Clerk.

**CHAIR:** Okay, we will hold that in abeyance. We will proceed while the Clerk is invited to attend.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have had some public antagonism to the new hospital as well and opposition to it, so maybe I should object.

**Mrs MILLER:** I did not ask you, with respect, Minister; I asked the Attorney-General.

**CHAIR:** Do you have another question which you would like to proceed with in the meantime?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I do in the meantime. Minister, what is the clinically recommended standard of time between the birth and discharge of a mother and a baby in Queensland public hospitals?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I would be more than happy to ask a clinically qualified person to answer that question, but we have very good clinical outcomes for mothers and babies in Queensland. There is a very strong commitment to ensure that mothers and babies have the best possible service in our hospitals. There is also a very strong commitment to ensure that we have a continuous model of care for expectant mothers, particularly with a midwifery model of care, to which I am very committed and to which the previous government made some commitments in those particular areas.

I would imagine there would be some degree of engagement between a mother who has had an unremarkable birth and her consultant clinicians, whether it be her obstetrician, midwife or whatever the case may be, upon her discharge. If you look at the discharges in other places around the world such as New Zealand, it is not unusual for a mum to go home from a birthing centre within four or six hours and receive their care continuously in the community. Our time of confinement in hospital is much greater than that on average. It generally runs into days, but I think there is no evidence whatsoever that there has been any compromising of care to mothers and babies in Queensland. I am more than happy to let Dr Cleary or anyone else who is clinically qualified to answer the specifics of the honourable member's question.

**CHAIR:** There does not appear to be anyone racing forward to answer that.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** If there is such a thing.

**CHAIR:** We will adjourn to our meeting room downstairs so that we can deliberate over your challenge to my ruling.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, I didn't challenge your ruling. I asked to speak to the Clerk.

**CHAIR:** Okay. We are not doing that here in open forum.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, that is fine. I am quite happy to keep going until you go into your government questions in the meantime. The Clerk can wait.

**CHAIR:** No, I was going to adjourn and go downstairs to address it.

**Mrs MILLER:** You don't need to.

**CHAIR:** We will adjourn momentarily and go down to the meeting room.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, sorry.

**CHAIR:** You summoned the Clerk so we will go and talk downstairs.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. I intend to speak to him privately.

**CHAIR:** Well you can't.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I can.

**CHAIR:** Not in this arena.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, just him and I. I can, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Member for Woodridge, did you have any contribution today?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Go to the other side.

**CHAIR:** I now call on the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** My question is to the minister. I note that page 15 of the SDS refers to prevention, promotion, protection and screening. Minister, can you advise of any new programs or initiatives designed to improve the targeting of BreastScreen services?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for his question. There has certainly been a long and ongoing commitment in Queensland to screening services, particularly breast-screening services. I was very pleased a number of years ago—about 20-odd years ago—to be present in Roma at a rural doctors conference where a commitment was made by a previous conservative minister who moved towards the process of mobile breast-screening facilities throughout Queensland. The outcomes for women in Queensland have been very much enhanced by access to breast-screening facilities in this state. That is something which we are going to continue to add to as well.

If one looks at the announcements which I have made in recent times, we will see thousands of new breast screens conducted right across the state of Queensland. Much of that will be utilising the recovery of assets from the now infamous alleged fake Tahitian prince in this state.

**Mrs MILLER:** I raise a point of order, Mr Chair. I think you should announce that the sub judice rule applies here.

**CHAIR:** There is a sub judice rule that does apply here, but I do not believe the minister touched on the case in any way, shape or form; just mentioned a reference to that part of the recovery process.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chair, as I understand it, there has been agreement reached with regard to the recovery of these particular assets. I think that is a matter which is well known publicly. It is a matter which is with the Public Trustee in Queensland, where the assets have been secured. They are going to be sold off. So I do not think there is anything which is very remarkable with that. On page 3 of the SDS it states—

Funds realised from the sale of assets fraudulently acquired by a former Queensland Health employee will be returned to Consolidated Revenue and re-directed to Queensland Health to ensure more public money is spent on essential frontline services. Funds estimated at \$11.9 million will support a number of initiatives ...

Some of those will be in the area of extra breast-screening services in Queensland. We believe that is going to make a significant difference. Indeed, right across the state it will mean thousands more breast screens conducted next year for Queensland women, which will be on top of an increase that we had already announced.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** Minister, I refer to that section on page 3 which you referred to. Could you inform the committee of the significant public health benefits to be gained from funding human papilloma virus vaccinations for boys in grades 8 and 10?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There are some significant benefits which can come from not only mass screening programs in Queensland but also mass vaccination programs, particularly in areas where we have identified serious ongoing health risks. As we all know, Professor Ian Frazer did the world an enormous service a number of years ago with the identification and the development of the human papilloma virus vaccine. This is something which has been rolled out across Australia for the immunisation of teenage girls, and we feel there is a significant advantage which comes now from moving to vaccinate teenage boys as well.

What we will see is a significant investment in that area to ensure that boys are vaccinated. It is getting up towards \$2 million, from the top of my head. We will start with year 8 boys. We will work in such a way to ensure that over the next couple of years those boys who transition from years 8 to 10 will be picked up. It will pick up all those year 9 boys and year 8 boys that are coming through as well. This will provide us with a mass population advantage in this area. The Commonwealth will be involved in the funding of the vaccine. We will be making funding available from the proceeds of a former Queensland Health employee, otherwise known as the person that I just referred to a moment ago, to ensure that we will be able to roll out the administration of the human papilloma virus vaccine to teenage boys in Queensland. That will ensure through a mass vaccination process we can assist in stopping girls—women in the future—contracting cervical cancer. Because, if they have not been vaccinated, there is more of a chance that their partner has been vaccinated. So there will be a much reduced chance that a woman in the future will contract cervical cancer as a consequence of the human papilloma virus.

**Mrs MILLER:** Page 8 of the SDS shows the structure of the assistant minister being in between the minister and the director-general. Page 78 of the SDS outlines the priorities for children's health services, and page 79 explicitly talks about delivering the Queensland Children's Hospital and the children's emergency unit at Prince Charles. I ask the director-general: did the assistant minister try to change in any shape, manner or form the rollout of the expansion of children's services to Prince Charles?

**Dr O'Connell:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** To anybody within your department?

**Dr O'Connell:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** You can categorically say that to nobody?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** No-one that mattered.

**Dr O'Connell:** I am not aware of him talking to anybody in my department about—

**Mrs MILLER:** I am asking whether you could take that on notice.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Certainly bypassed the minister. I would have thought I would have been involved in something like that.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, not necessarily. I am able to ask the director-general.

**CHAIR:** The director-general has been asked a question twice. He has reaffirmed twice that the answer is no.

**Mrs MILLER:** And not that he was aware of.

**CHAIR:** And not that he was aware of.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am asking the director-general whether he would take that on notice so that we are all sure of the answer.

**Dr O'Connell:** I am happy to take that on notice but you would be aware—

**CHAIR:** I remind the director-general that he cannot take any questions on notice. It is only the minister who can take questions on notice.

**Dr O'Connell:** Thank you, Chair.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am sure the minister is into transparency.

**CHAIR:** I also remind the director-general that, in answering questions, it is your entitlement and your prerogative to answer in any way you see fit.

**Mr Davies** interjected.

**Mr Trout** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Members, order! I now call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you so much for your protection, Chair.

**Mr DAVIES:** Unbelievable.

**Mr TROUT:** You need it.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have another question for the director-general in relation to page 3 of the SDS. Director-General, are hospital and health services under pressure to discharge mothers and babies earlier than is clinically recommended?

**Dr O'Connell:** No.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, do you have any written or verbal advice to you in relation to this matter?

**Dr O'Connell:** I am not aware of receiving any advice in that regard.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. Minister, in relation to question on notice No. 5 you claim 'the maternal and child health service will build on and revitalise existing services currently available through hospital and health services'. But is not the value of increased home visits diminished if mothers are discharged from hospital too early?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chair, I indicated earlier the importance of providing the best model of care for mothers in Queensland and expectant mothers and ensure that they have a level of confidence right through their pregnancy. That is why that continuity model of care is very important to me to ensure that they have confidence in the system. I do not think we can actually say that the longer you keep a mum in hospital you are going to necessarily get better outcomes, but I think there should be appropriate clinical consultation between the mother and her midwife or her obstetrician, her GP or whatever the case may be.

I am not aware of any clinical guidelines that exist that specify a time for the discharge of a mother from hospital after confinement, and I am not aware of any evidence that there has been any compromising of any mother's care in Queensland. However, what I will say is that it is very important to build on the success of what we have done in the past. I pay tribute to the previous government for private practising midwives in hospitals. Toowoomba was a start. It was the other hospital in Australia that allowed private practising midwives. I understand we are now rolling it out to the Gold Coast. I think it might even be rolled out to Ipswich and the northern outskirts of Brisbane. Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Bundaberg public hospitals now have accredited private practising midwives.

I want to see that particular model of care where mums can be better looked after in their own home if they choose to be as well. That is a long way from the issue of our mums and bubs policy, which we committed to at the last state election and which we are now in the process of rolling out. That will become operational and build up from later this year. The announcement is yet to be made. It will ensure that mothers receive a home visit at two and four weeks and then they will have the ability to visit—and they will be encouraged to visit—a community health facility at two, four, six, eight and 12 months. So I do not see any evidence of any compromising of maternal care in Queensland. In actual fact, from the initiatives that we are pursuing interstate and that we are trying to get recognition of nationally, I think there will be an enhancement of it.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is in relation to maternal and child health again. I refer to page 3 of the SDS. Minister, midwives and nurses are advising me that new mothers with their first babies are being discharged way too early and that they are re-presenting at the emergency departments across Queensland. They are very concerned that these mothers need more care in the hospital base setting and that they need to learn how to breastfeed as many have not even nursed a baby before. I ask you: do you believe that there is any correlation between the early discharge of new mothers and babies, particularly young mothers, and the child safety issues that are being raised within the parliament?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chairman, I think we have got to really reframe our thinking around a whole range of these things and the maternity model of care which has been in existence in not only Queensland but also Australia. This is something I am very much actively engaged in. Only recently, I attended and launched the new normal birth guidelines at Parliament House. Next month I will be attending another forum which is about providing a greater degree of birth options for mothers. I have a whole range of mothers who are coming to me saying that they want more options for their births. Some of them actually want them in the home, and that in itself is extremely problematic. We are trying to have more engagement as a team approach.

Indeed in my discussions with nurses and midwives, they are telling me that they want to move away from the over-medicalisation of the birth experience and more towards a continuous midwifery model, which I have a significant degree of sympathy for. On the issue of overrepresentation of people who you say have been discharged too early, I would need to see some evidence around that—

**Mrs MILLER:** Go to the Toowoomba Hospital. They will give you the evidence.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I can go to lots of hospitals—

**Mrs MILLER:** Ipswich too.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** And I can tell the honourable member that when I go to hospitals they tell me all sorts of things—

**Mrs MILLER:** Logan too.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** They tell me all sorts of things. And I tell you what: there are lots of rumour out there as well. We actually hear these things but when you check out some stuff, a lot of it does not prove to be correct.

**Mrs MILLER:** So nurses are liars?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** No. Some of it does. We saw an example of that before with regard to vaccinations for infants and children in the area of TB which proved to have another foundation for it as well. So if there is some evidence around that, I would like to see what it is.

I go to hospitals, and do you know what they say to me? They find the Health payroll debacle absolutely outrageous. The other day when I was at the QNU state council meeting, even though it was interesting, they were all shaking their heads around it. They cannot believe honourable members opposite continue to cover up and continue to compromise care. Maybe if there are issues out there with regard to staff, they relate to those 1,300 people whose jobs might be compromised as a consequence of the failure of the honourable member and her cohort to release that information.

I see no systemic evidence that what the honourable member is putting forward is right. Indeed the HHSs will be responsible for dealing with the issue of patient health quality and safety through a mandated subcommittee. Also, if there are issues of systemic concern reported up to the HQCC, I do not see the issue the honourable member is talking about. If she has more substantive information which is clinically based and sound, we are more than happy to look at that.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the minister in relation to page 3 of the SDS again. Are you able to explain this difference? If you are a new mother having your first baby and you have that baby in a private hospital—like the Mater mothers, Wesley, Sunnybank or wherever—you are probably going to spend four or five days in hospital, but if you go to a public health hospital, most of the time you are out within 24 hours. So what is the difference between the private hospital sector for a new mother and new baby—where they are vulnerable, they are learning how to look after a baby and they are also trying to get over the birthing process—and the public health system?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Are you talking about average rates there?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, average rates.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I think it is somewhat interesting that the honourable shadow minister is drawing some sort of conclusion around a successful maternal outcome and readiness with the amount of time that is actually related to being in hospital.

**Mrs MILLER:** You ask the mothers, Minister.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I ask a lot of mums. Do you know what they say to me? A lot of them say they want more choice. What is the caesarean rate in our private and not-for-profit hospitals? It is 50 per cent. What is the caesarean rate in our public hospitals in Queensland? It is 30 per cent. If the caesar rate is higher in private hospitals compared to public hospitals, that in itself will contribute immediately to the time of confinement—

**Mrs MILLER:** Caesarean mothers in public hospitals are sometimes discharged within two days of having a caesarean.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba! The minister is answering the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** And a lot of them are not as well. I am just saying that to make some sort of extraordinary correlation is absolutely ridiculous. The most important thing is to ensure that mothers are supported in the models of care that are actually appropriate. I know in the case of my own wife that, after our birthing unit closed at Inglewood, our first baby was born in the hospital—and we had to travel a long way—and it was in the ambulance back to the local hospital for recovery for the next day or so and then she was right to go home. Indeed, six hours after the birth of our last one, I drove her back there and she was right and raring to go. So there are different circumstances for different mothers. I understand that.

I launched the normal birth guidelines some time ago, and I felt very privileged to do that because this is an issue I am very passionate about. I pay enormous tribute to Professor Rebecca Kimble and her outstanding team in this area. They provide real guidance. I would say that this should be translated and adopted right throughout Queensland. There is a whole checklist which they have to go through—the discharge of a mother in a whole range of areas, pain management, her connection with the carer back in the community, her readiness for breastfeeding. There is probably some degree of subjectivity and objectivity around some of the statements that have been made by the honourable member. If there is some evidence, let us bring it forward. Also, if there are specific issues, maybe they should be raised with the CE of that relevant health service so they can be addressed.

**CHAIR:** Is there anything further, member for Bundamba?

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** Minister, page 29 of the SDS refers to the grants expenditure. Can you update us on the progress of the review of grants and the decision to engage former Auditor-General Glenn Poole?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Capalaba for his question. Yes, this has been another absolute ripper of a doozy which we inherited from the previous government. A former employee of Queensland Health, who I may have referenced on the periphery earlier on, is a classic example of why we need to overhaul the grants system in Queensland. One very industrious individual allegedly assisted himself to abscond with \$16 million under the watchful eye of the previous government.

One of the things I was very keen to do when I took over as minister in Queensland was to actually assess the grants program in Queensland and look at what are our core responsibilities. Our core responsibility is to contract people to deliver health services within the community. We do that in the area of ATODs, mental illness issues and those sorts of areas in the community. We assist a whole range of other groups as well, such as the Alzheimer's Association. In the area of preventative medicine in primary care, that is very much a core responsibility of the Commonwealth government under the auspices of the Medicare Locals. Indeed, only recently the chair of Medicare Locals, Arn Sprogis, indicated strong support for Queensland's way of dealing with this as well.

One of the really interesting things I found when we asked for a consolidated list of grants is that it took a long time. After three months, we were really struggling to get some consistency. A departmental officer admitted to one of my staffers that it had been 10 years since the minister's office had asked for a consolidated list of grants or shown any real interest in the area. That is what we are dealing with. Is it any wonder it was an absolute and complete dog's breakfast?

We have now engaged Glenn Poole, who was a well-respected former Auditor-General in Queensland, and he is going to methodically go through the process. His first tranche is to look at the issue of the way the grants processes worked initially. He has come back to us and said that a lot of these things we call grants are basically service contracts which have been given as gratuity without any KPIs around them. That is absolutely ridiculous. We have to reclassify and make sure that a grant is a gratuity if we want to give a small one-off thing, but when we are talking about service agreements we need to have some KPIs. There is an absolute dearth of KPIs around grants we give in the department, particularly in the preventative healthcare area, where there is very little evidence, if any, that they are working.

What Glenn Poole will be doing from here on in is reviewing the process of application, approval and assessment. We want to make sure that taxpayers in Queensland are getting the best value for money. Indeed, as a consequence of our reclassification and as a consequence also of the fact that we are going to be getting back to our core remit—which is actually providing assistance services to certain groups and delivering healthcare outcomes, with the Commonwealth doing primary and preventative health care and the overall review—there will be a saving within Queensland Health to the tune of around \$30 million.

**Mr DAVIES:** I have a supplementary on that. Minister, I understand Glenn Poole has been engaged as part of the health renewal team. Can you elaborate on the charter of the health renewal team? What does it actually do?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for the question. It is very important to cast a weather eye over every way the department operates, particularly when you look at the maladministration we inherited in Queensland Health. Even the previous government, in amongst all their cartwheeling, conniptions and carry-on, were basically saying that something needed to be done to address some of that.

I have found that it has been the lack of political leadership; it has not been the lack of desire from the hardworking staff within Queensland Health. Once you give them the ability to use their extraordinary innate ability—right from the executive management team through to our line managers and all the way down—they will do some quite remarkable work, and I commend them very much for that.

The health renewal team is in there. Their role is to assist and support Queensland Health and to look at some of the ways we run our systems to make sure we are efficiently and effectively delivering in the area of procurement. As I have already indicated, we are going to be looking to make sure we become far more contestable in the services we deliver and that we get best value for money for Queensland taxpayers as well. We need to cast a weather eye over the way we run our systems and structures. We constantly need to be looking at the health workforce that we have, particularly from an administrative level, to see if what we have in place has a true justification.

One of the problems we saw through reform processes in the past is that, when the reforms came in under the previous government, they actually meant more people in administration and less efficient outcomes as well. So the renewal team is coming in to assist Queensland Health executives to drive further change and reform to ensure we actually have the best systems, the best service delivery outcomes for our front-line people delivering services and the best patient care in Queensland. We will leave no stone unturned. We have got issues such as asset truthing that we need to look at which is pretty ramshackled. We will be using their skills and abilities to fill the gaps. We believe we will have a far more streamlined, efficient, effective and service-focused Queensland Health as a consequence.

**Mr TROUT:** Minister, I note that page 22 of the SDS highlights your commitment to reducing HIV transmission rates in Queensland in order to meet United Nations and Commonwealth targets. In addition to the Ministerial Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS, would you outline other measures you have taken to meet this target?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I say thank you very much to the member for Barron River. HIV/AIDS is something that should be of significant concern to a lot of people in the community. We all remember the scourge of HIV back in the 1980s which then transitioned into fully blown AIDS and the huge human toll that it took on individuals, their families and friends. The response that we needed at that time was very confronting—very in your face—to make the community aware of this serious illness, serious disease. We saw the introduction of things such as needle exchanges, the grim reaper advertising campaign and a great degree of awareness in the community. In the ensuing decades we have seen it fall off the radar. Because of treatment regimes we see very few people who are HIV positive going on to fully acquire AIDS. The new treatment regimes—the drugs—are quite effective. As we do an analysis of people who have been on those drugs for 20 or 30 years it will be interesting to see what the long-term consequences have been.

In recent years there has been an increase—a doubling—of HIV diagnosis in Queensland. That is not acceptable. The old way of dealing with it does not work, has not worked. This is a problem that has been identified across Australia. Indeed the association of AIDS councils has recently said that we need a new way of looking at it. Queensland is actually leading the way in that. I have established a ministerial advisory committee with experts in their field to advise us on the latest way of dealing with HIV/AIDS. We have actually run the first electronic advertising campaign around HIV/AIDS, which is designed to drive people towards website, diagnosis, treatment and awareness. People in the community say to me that they thought this issue was off the radar and did not exist anymore. That campaign commenced on 9 September and targets all sexually active Queenslanders. It is not just people who are in the high risk area who are at risk; there are other people who are at risk. As far as I am concerned, it is 'blue sky'. We need to look at a whole range of things such as rapid testing. We need to look at issues such as treatment as prevention, which does not happen in this country. That is now being adopted overseas. That is out there and is reasonably revolutionary and probably quite controversial, but they are the things we are looking at. We will be continuing to invest at least the same amount in HIV awareness and also prevention. We want to innovate as much as we can on the cutting edge.

There has been an indication that in the last year there has been a slight dip in HIV diagnosis. The same thing occurred in 2005-06 but then the trend line picked up again. Overall, what has been done has not been sustainable or long-term. Even since we made the changes, if you want to compare the dips, there probably has been a bit more of a dip down in the last month, but there is a long way to go and one swallow does not bring a spring. We have to look at this over the long term. We have to look at the failings nationally. Also, the federal government signed us up to quite ambitious targets of a 50 per cent reduction in the next three years, which I think will be very challenging given our very low base compared to some of the other countries around the world. We are going to have to work hard on it. We will need some national guidance and involvement as well.

**Mr TROUT:** Can you be clear that there is no reduction in funding to the HIV program?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** In actual fact there has been no reduction in the HIV program in Queensland. I have indicated also that, as far as I am concerned, that is the absolute baseline. We would be hoping to put more resources into it as need be.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the director-general, Dr Tony O'Connell. Director-general, can you confirm that the 2012-13 emergency department estimate of service provision reported on page 19 of the SDS is the sum total of the 17 hospital and health services?

**Dr O'Connell:** The emergency attendances are reported for the reporting hospitals—those that have the EDIS information system and that includes the Mater. When we record weighted activity units for emergency attendances we are recording the largest hospitals, the top 30 or so hospitals.

**Mrs MILLER:** The minister has advised through question on notice No. 14 that the state-wide totals include ED activity provided through agreements with Mater Health Services, as you have said, as well as a number of other sources. Director-general, why are these not detailed in the Service Delivery Statement and what are the weighted activity units for these private providers? The reason I ask this

question is that the sum of the 17 individual ED estimates for hospital and health services, in fact, indicates a four per cent state-wide decrease rather than a 2.2 per cent increase as indicated in the SDS. So something is wrong with the numbers.

**Dr O'Connell:** There is a problem that activity levels which are contained within the SDS for each HHS cannot simply be summed to derive the total for the system as a whole. As noted in footnote No. 23 to the performance stated in the SDS on page 23, 'The state-wide totals include activity through agreements with the Mater,' as well as a number of other sources. The weighted activity units provide a common unit of comparison between different types of activity so that we can compare activity, for example, with outpatient departments and in-patients. For example, the number of actual ED attendances, the raw number, is more like 1.7 million per annum. The weighted activity units look like a small fraction of that because each individual ED attendance is relatively small compared to something more like an in-patient admission. Just to further answer your question, we do not report the attendances at private hospital emergency departments other than the Mater.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much. I have a question for the minister. How will the minister meet his commitment that by 1 January 2013 there will be no ambulance ramping at any hospital emergency departments and that no hospital emergency department will go on bypass when it is unclear if there is a decrease in emergency department service provision in 2012-13 compared with 2011-12?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much for the question from the shadow minister. I can guarantee that we will not see the debacle that permeated the previous government in Queensland when patients were whipped around the place like pass the parcel and there was a failure to provide political leadership and guidance from the top down as to how we should deal with the issue of ambulance bypass and some of the other system redesign which needs to be done properly and competently as a part of any move towards getting rid of ambulance bypass and reducing ramping. I am not sure that I have ever said anywhere that there will be an end to ramping. We have to ensure that people get off the stretcher and actually get into the ED much quicker than they do currently.

What we have are very ambitious targets. I think it is fair to say that those ambitious targets, which have come out of the national health reform, may actually be a rod for our own back nationally. If we are looking at 90 per cent of people being taken off stretchers and transferred into the ED within 30 minutes, that is going to make our EDs very, very lucrative compared to the GP or the primary care setting. Some of the system redesign has been quite remarkable. I mention particularly here Metro South which has been working very hard in this area. They have already jumped ahead of where I wanted them to be, and I think that is fantastic. They implemented the 'no bypass' policy on 1 October which has seen not only that no hospitals have gone on bypass with regard to Redlands, QEII, Logan and PA, but also people have been taken out of the ambulance quicker than previously and have transitioned through the ED quicker than previously—and that is due to system redesign. The Labor Party probably cannot understand the money equation; they would just throw another bucket of money at the problem. It is system redesign. It has been quite remarkable. This is so even in the electorate of the honourable member for Woodridge with regard to the Logan Hospital. I await confirmation from Dr Ashby but I believe that the other day they actually reached their national emergency access target for the first time due to this redesign whilst working in this new system. It is quite remarkable. Some of those clinicians have been doing good work in the last few months in the redesign area. What we have seen is proof of what you can actually do in those areas.

Also, measurable improvements to patient flow and access have been recorded across several sites. Two outstanding examples are projects in Cairns and Hinterland HHS and also Gold Coast Health and Hospital Service. We know this is a challenge in many ways. We know that we have a growing population and there are going to be a lot of challenges in the area. However, we also have to ensure that we do not become a victim of our own success. Do I believe that there will not be remarkable incidents with regard to EDs and ramping in the future? I never said there would not be, especially when you are dealing with more than a million emergency department presentations each year. I believe that what we are putting in place will assist us to meet the strategy that I have adopted. With the active engagement of very innovative clinicians we are going to meet those particular targets to ensure we meet the national requirements. I do think at some stage in the future we will have to have a discussion at the national level. Otherwise we will break the nexus between primary care in the GP setting and our emergency departments, which are actually showing positive success.

**Mrs MILLER:** The minister is going back on his hollow promise that there will be no ambulance ramping. I have a question for the CEO of the Metro South Hospital and Health Service, Dr Richard Ashby.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, could you clarify that imputation?

**Mrs MILLER:** He had said that there would be no ambulance ramping and he went back on it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I said there would be no ambulance bypass. I said we would be working to reduce the issue of ambulance ramping. You would have a very, very inefficient health system if you actually had more bays than ambulances arriving. You could imagine what would have to happen there.

We have to make sure we can get people off the stretchers and into the hospital within clinically prescribed times. That is going to be four hours now rather than eight hours. I think we are doing a great job of meeting our targets. That is a long way away from the mob who ran this state prior to 24 March.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you, Dr Ashby. The PA Hospital has had significant problems in the past with ambulance ramping. May I acknowledge your very brave action in moving the ambulance bypass deadline forward. The Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative report into ambulance ramping, which is noted in the SDS at page four, the recommendations of which have been accepted by the minister in full, state—

The greatest single contributing factor to ED overcrowding is Access Block (the inability to access an inpatient hospital bed).

I ask: is the PA Hospital closing in-patient beds or is it holding beds vacant for potential emergency admissions?

**Dr Ashby:** The PA Hospital has no beds closed and has not had any beds closed for over 2½ years. So the hospital operates at 100 per cent capacity all of the time. The ability to avoid ramping and bypass has come about, as the minister referred to, through clinical redesign. Over the last 12 months the PA Hospital, along with all of the other hospitals in Metro South, has undertaken very serious clinical redesign programs supported by the department with funds totalling over a million dollars to engage external support to completely redesign the way we process our patients and the way we manage our beds. In particular, now we are moving into the next step, which is coordinating the distribution of patients across the whole of Metro South. As the minister reported earlier, last weekend for the first time since we started recording this data, Logan Hospital achieved the national emergency access target as did the PA Hospital and QEII Hospital on the same day. That has not occurred before and certainly not in the last three years. The PA Hospital has not been on ambulance bypass since November 2011. Prior to that it was on bypass eight per cent of the time.

**Mrs MILLER:** Minister, will you please provide details of the number of inpatient beds for the PA as at 24 March 2012 and as of today? I understand that you will probably need to take that on notice.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** We will be very happy to take it on notice.

**Mrs MILLER:** I would also like to call the chief executive of the West Moreton Health and Hospital Service. Are you confident that there will be no ambulance ramping at Ipswich from 1 January 2013 onwards?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Ramping?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Bypass?

**Mrs MILLER:** No. I am asking about ramping.

**Ms Dwyer:** Similar to Metro South, we are also undertaking a clinical service redesign within our emergency department. We are also confident that we will be able to institute the no-bypass rule prior to January. Part of that is to actually ensure we have processes in place to ensure that ambulances are able to off-load patients as quickly as possible. Part of our redevelopment within the emergency department is also providing for a transition area to assist with that.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am well aware of the redevelopments, Ms Dwyer. It came about under our Labor government.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a further question?

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** Minister, page 22 of the Service Delivery Statements outlines that the 2012-13 target has been set to align Queensland with the national partnership agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes by 2033-34. Would you please describe what additional moneys you have allocated to meet these targets?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for the question. Certainly there has been much made of Closing the Gap in recent years. There are a number of key indicators in the area of Indigenous health about which we need to be concerned with regard to some of the chronic disease issues, in the area of diabetes—issues such as renal failure. The comparative life expectancy of Indigenous people is much lower than for the general population. There have been some issues with regard to the birth weights of Indigenous babies. There has been some improvement in those areas but we have to do more work.

One of the real challenges is to make sure that the money that is allocated actually goes to addressing the issue of Indigenous health care in Queensland. We do have confusion and duplication in certain areas around the state. That is very true. It is something I have raised with Indigenous primary healthcare organisations around Queensland, and they actually admit that this is something we need to do. It is a system failure on our part as much as anyone else's. It is about sharing information and ensuring we are not duplicating and triplicating.

With regard to initiatives, it is up to the state to decide how it allocates its commitment to Closing the Gap. One of the significant areas of improvement ties in with our patient transport assistance scheme. We made a solid commitment before the election to ensure that people who had to travel for care or to access an appointment had the accommodation allowance doubled—and that also applies to approved escorts—from \$30 to \$60. Also, the kilometric allowance will increase from 15c to 30c a kilometre.

I will give some indication of what that means for the Torres Strait-Northern Peninsula. There will not be much in terms of the kilometric allowance because we already support people with ferries and road transport once they have touched down using an aircraft in Townsville, Cairns, Brisbane or wherever the case may be. In the last year we actually paid out \$1.88 million in accommodation for patients and \$900,000 for their approved escorts. So the enhancements in that area alone will result in \$3 million for the people of Torres Strait-Northern Peninsula.

I do not have the figures, but if you extrapolate that you will see that it will be of significant benefit to Indigenous patients across Cape York because they suffer a serious tyranny of distance. It will be a similar situation with the North West, the Central West and the South West HHS. I am trying to get some figures but, to give you an indication, in the Torres Strait-Northern Peninsula alone we are looking at around \$3 million from that commitment of Closing the Gap funding into that particular area. One of the key priorities is to ensure access to accommodation and care for Indigenous patients.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I refer to an article in today's *Australian*. Are there any other circumstances where you find that pertinent information is being withheld under the cabinet-in-confidence laws that would assist your department in delivering better planning outcomes and save the Queensland taxpayer further expenditure on information that has already been gathered?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There is another example, of course. The previous government actually conducted a bed report—that is, how many beds are projected to be needed by Queensland Health and our health facilities into the future. That particular document has been taken to cabinet. That document may be quite unremarkable, but one actually has to wonder what the great secrecy is around a bed report. I understand that that report cost in the vicinity of \$30,000. We now have to decide whether we should duplicate that or whether we use internal resources to try to elucidate what our requirements will be in the future. Whilst the report may be able to guide the department in some of its planning, it is not something I can access because it is considered to be off limits to the minister of the day. I might want to be able to compare that to any information and data which is provided to me.

I simply ask: what could be remarkable about a consultant's report on the future bed needs for Queenslanders? I do place a caveat on that. It is not true to say that it is just a matter of more beds. If we get mesmerised by the concept of providing more beds, we do not look at the efficiency of our bed use. As we heard from Dr Ashby earlier, it is often how you use your beds that is more important.

I also commend the West Moreton Hospital and Health Service board for the wonderful work they have done to date, in conjunction with their staff—this has been ongoing for some time—on productive ward redesign. They are actually discharging people much more quickly. That quicker discharge of people and that ward redesign are leading to the freeing up of beds. Once one applies criteria led discharge, far better outcomes are achieved. Beds on their own do not give outcomes just in health; they are also an important guide to what we may need in order to deal with growth in the future. That document was taken to cabinet by the previous government. It may be unremarkable, but we may have to replicate that expenditure as a consequence.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, can you clarify for the committee what your commitment on ambulance bypass was, as there seems to be some confusion between bypassing and ramping?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I do not remember ever saying that we would be able to eliminate ambulance ramping. As a very distinguished clinician said to me some time ago, in order to eliminate ambulance ramping you would have to have an extraordinary number of bays in the event that a number of ambulances turned up at the same time. Our commitment is to reduce ambulance ramping. We would prefer to see people off the stretcher and into the ED within 30 minutes. That in itself ensures a more efficient use of our emergency departments, our ambulance bays, our paramedics and our ambulance vehicles throughout Queensland.

My commitment was to ban ambulance bypass in Queensland. Of course, this affects some hospitals more than others. Bypass is not really such a big issue in rural and remote areas—there may not be another hospital to bypass to—but certainly in South-East Queensland it is a major issue. My commitment was to adopt the Metropolitan Emergency Department Access Initiative report, which made 15 recommendations. I have adopted them in full and have translated that to the board chairs around Queensland for adoption. They will be doing that.

But it is not just about bypass. Hospitals cannot 'pass the parcel'. That has been the practice in the past, but there is no empirical evidence that there are decent clinical outcomes for patients by passing them from one hospital to the next and the next over a seven- or eight-hour period. We have seen terribly tragic outcomes. That is not to say there might not be circumstances in which, because of some catastrophe, it becomes necessary. But generally, as a principle, we do not want to do it anymore.

The solution encompasses redesigns, having clinically qualified nurses assessing people when they turn up, getting patients off stretchers in 30 minutes and making sure we have coordinated teams working when a person presents to an ED. It is about the whole process—making sure that the radiology is booked, that the pathology is booked, that the bed is freed up and that the discharges have happened at the right time, even over the weekend. That is where criteria led discharge is important. It does not relate to ramping—we will certainly be reducing ramping and getting people off stretchers—but it certainly relates to bypass, which is ambulances being pushed from one place to another.

The other critical factor in that is to ensure coordination between ambulance comms and our hospital and health services. I pay tribute to our colleagues in the Queensland Ambulance Service for their work and to my colleague the minister for his work. I also pay tribute to the unions that were involved in this process, because they have been very supportive of it.

**Mrs MILLER:** I call the CEO of the Torres Strait-Northern Peninsula Hospital and Health Service. I refer to page 151 of the SDS. Can you explain why the outpatient total weighted activity units in your service are anticipated to increase 376 per cent in 2012-13 compared with 2011-12—from 1,384 to 6,593?

**Ms Kolaric:** I apologise: at this point I cannot. I am going to have to refer back to my clinical colleagues to discuss that.

**Mrs MILLER:** I believe it is an error. I believe that the correct number should be 1,593, meaning that there has been a statewide cut of four per cent in outpatient services. To help the committee, I would like to suggest that all CEOs check their service estimates.

**CHAIR:** Is there a question there?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. Are you able to—

**Ms Kolaric:** We will find out for you. I apologise. I do not know and I will find out what that is.

**CHAIR:** Minister, will you take that question on notice?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am more than happy to. I do have an answer for the honourable member with regard to Princess Alexandra Hospital bed numbers. The numbers relayed to me are: June 2010, 781; June 2011, 781; June 2012, 811—and 30 MAPU beds opened in June 2012.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a further question to the director-general. Can you confirm that the state-wide estimate reported on page 19 of the SDS is the sum of the outpatient total weighted activity units for the 17 hospital and health services?

**Dr O'Connell:** The figure is the sum for those units which report their outpatient activity.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. Thank you so much. Again, why are these not detailed in the SDS? What are the weighted activity units for the private providers? Are you able to get that information for us?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, because the private providers do not report to me as director-general.

**Mrs MILLER:** So we cannot have that information?

**Dr O'Connell:** You are referring to the various private hospitals in Queensland.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Dr O'Connell:** They are not under my jurisdiction.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. If you were to get that information at any point would that be available to this committee?

**CHAIR:** That is a bit speculative.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, because I know that documents are provided to directors-general on occasions. Have there been any other statistics?

**Dr O'Connell:** I have never received outpatient activity reports from bodies that are not reporting to me, no.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. That is all right.

**Dr O'Connell:** Nor to the hospital and health service boards under the current governance arrangement.

**Mrs MILLER:** Okay. That is fine. I have a question for the minister. I refer to page 4 of the SDS which says.

... the Government is committed to transparency and accountability.

I refer to the government's CBD redevelopment plans and Clive Palmer's comments to Channel 7 news on 17 September 2012. I refer to Mr Palmer's statement to Channel 7 that he had a fundraising dinner at his house and raised half a million dollars for the LNP. I ask: minister, have you attended any fundraisers at Mr Palmer's home as minister?

**CHAIR:** I am not entirely sure of relevance.

**Mrs MILLER:** It is in relation to page 4 of the SDS, which is about transparency and accountability. It is quite clear.

**CHAIR:** No, in relation to external matters.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, it is. I am sure he would like to answer it, anyway.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** In the interests of transparency and accountability, I will do something that the honourable member is not used to doing—and I would love to encourage her in transparency and accountability. She could cough up those legal documents today and assist this committee—

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, they are there.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Assist this committee in having a proper inquiry into finding out what IBM and the unions know. But no, it looks like transparency and openness flows only one way around here.

**Mrs MILLER:** You do not want to answer it, do you.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** The simple answer to that is no. But I just say—

**Mrs MILLER:** So you have not attended fundraising functions at Clive Palmer's home?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I do not know; I suppose you could find a simpler answer than 'No', but anyway, it might be a bit complicated—

**Mrs MILLER:** No, no, yes or no.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** But now that I have become a bit of a trendsetter in openness and transparency, maybe you should try it sometime.

**Mrs MILLER:** I note that the Attorney-General advised in his estimates committee hearing on 11 October that he was prepared to table the lobbyists register from his office. Minister, in the interests of open and accountable government and transparency, as you put it, will you also commit to tabling the lobbyists register?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Lobbying? It had its genesis with that mob opposite. That is the whole reason we ended up having to have one, because they could not find the difference between their mates who used to get ejected out of this place and then find their way back through the back door at squillions of dollars at taxpayers' expense along the way. Certainly, we have obligations to maintain a lobbyists register, which is regularly reported to the Integrity Commissioner in Queensland and everything we do complies with that. I have no issue whatsoever. I am not sure what the protocols are for tabling and those things. It is of no issue to me. I am more than happy. But there you go: there are two examples of openness and transparency. Let us make it a third one.

**Mrs MILLER:** You are doing well.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Come on, let us make it a third one. Let us try an inquiry, let us get IBM and the union movement in. Let us get the opposition leader in to show what she has with the legal advice. Do we have to make it five to one, do we?

**CHAIR:** Make it go viral.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Okay. There you go.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am sure the minister is well aware of viral and viruses. I call the CEO from the Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service, Dr Peter Bristow.

**Mr Trout** interjected.

**Mrs MILLER:** Chair, I find the comments made by the member for Barron River unparliamentary and I ask him to withdraw.

**CHAIR:** The member finds the comments offensive. I ask the member for Barron River to withdraw.

**Mr TROUT:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Withdrawn.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you, Dr Bristow. I refer to the SDS in relation to outpatients and I ask: can you explain why the outpatient estimate for your service, which we all know includes the minister's own electorate, has a 19 per cent increase in 2012-13 when the rest of the state as a whole is looking at a cut in outpatient services? Can you explain why?

**Dr Bristow:** I do know that there has been a significant increase with the opening of the new regional cancer centre, which was completed and opened on 9 July. That has a significant increase in the number of chemotherapy and also oncology outpatient services. So there was a planned growth. I think there is some discrepancy but we are working through with the department in the total allocation between outpatient and in-patient for those WAUs and we are continuing to negotiate with the department about the true interpretation of those numbers. So that may account for the difference that you have alluded to.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much. So you are saying that there is a discrepancy in the numbers as far as—

**Dr Bristow:** No, can I say with respect, Mrs Miller, that essentially there would be an increase to be expected because of the opening of the regional cancer centre and the expansion of services. Secondly, however, because we are negotiating with the department about whether some of the weighted activity units should be attributed as in-patient or outpatient occasions of service, that may cause some minor differences between the two. There would be an increase because of the additional services. The true allocation between in-patient and outpatient is a matter for debate, but it does not affect the overall funding.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much, Dr Bristow, for your explanation. Chair, I would like to table please a newspaper article from the *Sunshine Coast Daily* dated 4 August in relation to ramping which mentions the minister. I would like to table an article from the *Cairns Post* dated Friday, 3 August in relation to ending ramping at that hospital. That will do in relation to ramping at this point in time.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. Do you have anything further?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I do. I refer the minister to page 1 of the SDS. Minister, do you recall having asked numerous questions in the parliament in the past when you were opposition leader about the adequacy of staffing levels at the John Tonge Centre? Do you recall questions like No. 1667, dated 17 June 2004, where you asked how many times it has been heard from this government that it is fixing the problem at the John Tonge Centre?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, going back to 2004 is hardly consistent with the interrogation of this budget.

**Mrs MILLER:** It is in relation to page 1 of the Health SDS.

**CHAIR:** The member is not being relevant. I will take a question from a government member if you do not rephrase and get back on track. We are talking about this budget, not 2004.

**Mrs MILLER:** I am just asking about his recollection. I am sure you would like to answer it, minister.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much. I have lots of recollections.

**Mrs MILLER:** I bet you do.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I can recollect asking lots of questions about that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I can also recollect over a period of time asking the honourable member's current leader to release the legal advice on the Health payroll.

**Mrs MILLER:** Sad, sad.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have been asking those sorts of things and I can recollect over and over again—and I am sure the honourable member can recollect but chooses not to as well. So, yes, I have lots of recollections. It may be of great assistance if the honourable member should prise herself away from defending the indefensible and to encourage her current leader to be open and transparent and release that and save up to 1,300 jobs in Queensland.

There is no doubt that the John Tonge Centre does a lot of good work—in actual fact, exceptionally good work—in regard to police evidence and DNA. There is also no doubt that over a period of time there had been some issues with regard to concerns around the responsiveness and the resourcing at that particular centre in dealing with police evidence and DNA issues. That was raised—I think if I can go back into the archives of my mind to see who was the police minister at the time it might have even been Judy Spence and others. There has been a significant improvement and I can assure the honourable member, to assist her beyond her palpitations, that when it comes to the matter of the John Tonge Centre specifically with police evidence and DNA, there will be no reductions whatsoever with FTEs—no reduction with FTEs.

It is also true, as I have indicated publicly, that there will be some realignment of other services out there in the broad forensic area, which is categorised as food, water testing—those sorts of things—which we believe most appropriately should be more efficiently delivered, not duplicated, by the HHSs in Queensland or contracted and I have indicated that. But police evidence and DNA, which was specifically a part of the issues that I raised and pursued with the previous government, they have the same number of FTEs.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mrs MILLER:** I refer the minister to page 1 of the SDS. Why does the minister think that DNA evidence processing is more important than the evidence processed for police prosecutions undertaken by the forensic chemistry and forensic toxicology units? Minister, have you been watching too much *CSI*?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I do not know. I think there was a little bit of super sleuthing going on over there before with you pursuing all of these sorts of wild, weird and wacky conspiracy theories, running around with your little magnifying glass.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, they are proper glasses.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** They are not the ones you use for super sleuthing, surely. It would be a great big magnifying glass—maybe even a microscope. I am extremely confident that in the crucial areas that are of most concern—in the area of police evidence and DNA—that we will be able to continue to provide that service effectively. That is the advice that is available to me. Should we be looking at the way that we deliver other services from that facility? Absolutely, we should—the same as we are casting a weather eye over the way we run a whole range of other things throughout Queensland as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I now call the member for Barron River.

**Mr TROUT:** As outlined on page 10 of the SDS, can the minister please outline what steps have been taken towards delivering on the LNP's election commitment to expand maternal and child health services?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Absolutely. I thank the honourable member for Barron River very much for the question. This follows in some ways when a question was asked by the honourable member for Bundamba earlier where I made a reference to the LNP's Mums and Bubs policy, which the Premier is most enthusiastic about, which ensures that we deliver for mothers and babies in Queensland. An announcement of where that is going to start and how it is going to be rolled out is absolutely imminent. I can assure the honourable member that we will be keeping our commitment to this, which will ensure that mothers in Queensland will receive a home visit at two and four weeks after the birth and also we will be encouraging them to visit an appropriate facility at two, four or six or eight months and 12 months after their infant is born to ensure that they are getting that follow-up and support as well.

The other great news that we have is that, by redesigning and looking at the maternal and child welfare services that we already provide here in Queensland, we believe that we will be able to deliver this outcome far more cost-effectively than what the original election commitment was. I commend everyone who has been involved in the department with regard to that, because it will make sure that this service is delivered cost-effectively and provided ahead of time.

This will be a really good outcome for mothers and babies in Queensland. The honourable member for Bundamba indicated support for mothers and babies. We believe that having mothers and babies supported in the home is important as well. That is not to say that that service is not provided in some way at the moment. We want to expand that and extend it. I think there has been a long-term view across the political divide about the importance of providing these outreach services to mothers and babies. When that commences, which I understand will be later this year, we will progressively roll it out across Queensland in conjunction with our HHSs and other providers across the state.

**CHAIR:** The SDS on page 134 outlines the South West HHS's key priorities for 2012-13 which include providing better access to health services, addressing and improving key population health challenges and risks, supporting the government's commitments to revitalise front-line services for families and better delivery of infrastructure. Would you please detail any other activities that you have undertaken in the South West HHS town of Roma to provide better access to health services?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I would assume that the honourable member is actually referring to the expansion of the flying services that are based in Roma and in particular the Flying Obstetrics and Gynaecology Service. This is something that we are very committed to expanding and offering to more women around Queensland. Currently we have a flying obstetrician and gynaecologist that is basically in the air for around about 400 hours a year responding to emergency care needs of women across the state, particularly in the more remote areas, and also attending to more routine gynaecological requirements as well.

I made a very solid commitment this year at the Rural Doctors Association conference on the Gold Coast to move towards the expansion of this service to 1,000 hours a year in the air. That is going to be progressively enhanced. It is going to move, early next year, to 600 hours; then we will go to 800 hours and it will go to 1,000 hours after that. Of course we need to make sure that we build the capability. We do not have the need for 1,000 hours straight up front, but we do have a greater need than what we are able to service at the moment. That will move, as I said, to 600 hours at the start of next year. We are making sure that we can fit out aircraft appropriately. The other thing, of course, is rearranging the contracts with the Royal Flying Doctor Service because we do not have very good use of aircraft currently. We have aircraft which have a designated number of hours, they sit on the ground for a certain period of time, they cannot be used for this purpose. It is about flexibility in the contract; making sure we have aircraft that have that cross-capability as well.

The very important thing is that we can respond to an urgent care need to assist what are very excellent generalist physicians—GPs—in areas and who have skills and support in obstetrics and surgery in hospitals who basically need to know that they have someone who has even more advanced specialist skills only a half an hour or so away who can get there quickly and assist them and that

mother can be evacuated to somewhere where they can get even a higher level of care. So, yes, it is progressing well. I pay commendation to everyone who has been involved and also thank the South West HSS for their involvement in this as well.

**Mr TROUT:** I refer to the reference to the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme on page 10 of the SDS. Could you please update the committee on the progress of the LNP's election commitment to increase the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme as well as outline what other steps have been taken to enhance support to patients required to travel?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much, through you, Mr Chair, to the honourable member for Barron River. It ties in very well with what I indicated earlier in relation to another question about Indigenous access to healthcare across the cape and with regard to the allocation of some of that Closing the Gap funding for part of this process to assist the needs of Indigenous patients as well who suffer probably more than any others proportionally around this state from the tyranny of distance. This is one of the issues that rural and regional members tend to receive a great degree of traffic on in their electorate offices and, indeed, some of the members across North Queensland actually write to me continually about these issues. It is probably the greatest level of correspondence. There has also been very strong advocacy from the likes of the Leukaemia Foundation, the Queensland Cancer Council and others who represent and support remote and rural patients as they are confined to treatment in city environments a long way away from home. We do know that there is a significant cost.

After a lot of pressure a few years ago the previous government increased the kilometric allowance from 10c a kilometre to 15c a kilometre, but there had been no increase in the accommodation subsidy since 1987. We have now moved to double the kilometric allowance. We will also be doubling the accommodation allowance to \$60 for the patient and an approved escort. That has been very much hailed and well received by patients and their families around Queensland who have to confront the tyranny of distance. I recently launched this at the Leukaemia Foundation's excellent facility on the south side to the appreciation of patients and people who have been coming sometimes for years for several weeks at a time.

There has been an allocation of \$19.9 million in capital grants to non-government organisations to build or enhance accommodation for patients travelling to access specialist health services; \$5 million for the development of capital funding applications; \$1 million to the Cancer Council Queensland for a Central Queensland Cancer Support Centre at Rockhampton which has been operational since 2009; a \$2.5 million grant to CCQ for a facility in Cairns which has been operational since September 2011; a \$2.93 million grant to the Leukaemia Foundation of Queensland to extend its existing patient accommodation facility in Townsville—that was opened in September of this year; a \$3 million grant to CCQ for a facility in Toowoomba which has been operational since December 2011; a \$5 million grant to Australian Red Cross to demolish and rebuild the existing patient accommodation facility in Cairns significantly increasing patient accommodation—its anticipated completion date is June 2013; and a \$4.97 million grant to CCQ for a facility in Brisbane due for completion in March 2013. I acknowledge that some of these initiatives had their genesis under our predecessors and I thank them very much for that. We have taken it and expanded it further. We have been very committed to the day-to-day tyranny of distance issues which we have addressed through the kilometric allowance and the overnight accommodation allowance which in many ways will also assist organisations such as the Leukaemia Foundation and the Cancer Council to use some of their funding which they have to invest in new facilities rather than just cross-subsidising the facilities that they may have built over the years or been supported in doing.

**Mrs MILLER:** I refer to SDS page 1 and I ask the minister: why have six highly trained scientists been sacked from the Forensic Chemistry Unit at the John Tonge Centre?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Can I just segue in—because segue is the word of the day, is it not, Mr Chairman—I tabled in parliament a number of weeks ago some of the people who left the employee of the previous government as a part of their letter writing campaign where they wrote to people saying 'Your position has been identified as—'

**Mrs MILLER:** No, they are sacked.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There are a range of people, and some of them were front-line, who, if you listen to this opposition, would not be able to be let go. Some of them were in counselling services over there. I laid down the caveat earlier on, and I have also said publicly from the time I got the first question around this from the *Sunday Mail* a number of weeks ago, that there will be no change to staff numbers in the area of police evidence and DNA, but that there would be some changes in other areas. That is not to say that within that FTE component there will not be some changes in personnel, but the FTEs are going to stay the same. I do not have the specifics of what the honourable member indicates, but if there is any inference that compromises my commitment to the retention of the FTE numbers in police evidence and DNA I would be most intrigued about that. I doubt very much it in any way compromises that. Maybe the departmental officer who has more details in this area might like to come forward and specifically answer it, but I do not have the specifics.

**CHAIR:** You heard the question or would you like it again?

**Ms Byrne:** I would appreciate it again, thank you.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you very much for joining us. I am asking why have six highly trained scientists been sacked from the Forensic Chemistry Unit?

**Ms Byrne:** Nobody has been sacked. There is a very large program of redevelopment and re-design going on at Forensic and Scientific Services. As the minister said, there are some areas that have been quarantined, some areas in particular associated with police evidence and DNA analysis. There are 450-odd scientists in that facility undertaking a huge range of tasks. We are trying to assess those functions that can be done by commercial providers and retaining the highly specialised services where there is the volume. So there are some efficiencies that have been gained through changes of that sort.

**Mrs MILLER:** If they are not sacked, what are they? Are these six people, the scientists, are they there or are they not there?

**Ms Byrne:** There is a process of re-design of the services.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, I am asking are they there or are they not there, these six highly trained scientists?

**Ms Byrne:** Nobody has gone.

**Mrs MILLER:** Nobody has gone?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Maybe the honourable member could give us some more information.

**CHAIR:** Or could give us a list of names.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I take full responsibility for the corporate office re-design—or at least myself and Anna Bligh because she said we needed to make some change as well—but I also say that the honourable member opposite ought to take full responsibility for what is happening in the regions and the districts with regard to the 1,300 jobs lost out there.

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh dear, you are getting a bit tired, Minister.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It is very much true that as part of our re-design there is a closed merit selection process for areas where particular units are being scaled down. There is no doubt about that. There is going to be VRs offered and redeployment and then if they do not take that there will be retrenchment, but I am not aware that there has been any in that particular area yet.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question in relation to SDS page 1 and the John Tonge Centre. Is the minister aware that the Forensic Chemistry Unit almost exclusively test police evidence and provide 24/7 field support and specialist training for the Illicit Laboratory Investigation Team of the Queensland Police Service? Are you aware of that?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am always a little bit cautious about the contentions that are put forward by the honourable member opposite.

**Mrs MILLER:** It is true.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I indicated earlier on that when it comes to the crucial elements of police evidence and DNA, those FTEs in that area were going to be quarantined, those numbers as a quantum, and that we would actually be working through in the others areas the issue of being able to access that assistance from outside using private providers, contracting or in some cases some of the services which have been offered there are going back to the HHSs. So if there is any evidence that that is going to compromise any investigations or analysis I would be most interested if the honourable member could give us some more details.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question, particularly in relation to what Ms Byrne has just spoken about which is this roust to privatise. Does the minister honestly believe that there are private contractors, employing highly trained staff with postgraduate science degrees like these people have, willing to be on call 24/7 to respond to dangerous drug labs, explosive seizures, toxic chemical spills and even murders? Do you believe that there would be private providers available for this 24/7?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I certainly believe there are private providers out there that can deliver a \$6 million health payroll contract for \$6 million.

**Mrs MILLER:** No. Answer the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Maybe the honourable member opposite does not believe that. I am happy to look at the specifics of what the honourable member is saying, but I am very confident that we will be able to address all the issues and the main requirements in the area of police evidence and DNA without the sky falling in, as the honourable member would have us believe.

**Mrs MILLER:** Chair, I would like to inform the committee that there is not a single private forensic laboratory in the country that offers a 24/7 service.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I do not think there was a question there.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, I am just giving the minister some information that I am sure he will be interested in. I have a follow-up question.

**Ms Byrne:** Can I say something that might be helpful?

**CHAIR:** Yes, Ms Kathy Byrne?

**Ms Byrne:** In the units that you are referring to, there will be 120 people left.

**Mrs MILLER:** So how many are going?

**Ms Byrne:** I think 11 occupied positions will be leaving, out of 135.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you so much. I have a question for the minister in relation to SDS 1. Minister, will bone marrow for cancer treatment still be collected at the John Tonge Centre?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I will ask somebody with more clinical detail to answer that. I am not quite sure if the honourable member's question relates to some of the other readjustments, ultimately, that are happening with regards to donor and banking issues, particularly around the Metro South and Metro North HHSs, but I am more than happy for Ms Byrne or anyone else to answer the question.

**CHAIR:** I think Dr Michael Cleary is coming forward to field that.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Dr Cleary, absolutely.

**Dr Cleary:** I am not quite sure of the specifics of the question in terms of bone banking and cancer treatment. However, it is probably noteworthy that the capacity to increase donation rates in Queensland and our solid organ and tissue capacity has been quite substantial over the past few years. Queensland's donation rate has increased and our organ and tissue procurement rate is quite outstanding. In terms of the question, most of the bone that is managed through that facility is used to treat patients who require that particular tissue to assist with surgery. If someone is having a reconstructive surgical procedure, the bone is used by the surgeons to assist in the surgical repair, as opposed to the treatment of specific cancer areas.

**Mrs MILLER:** I refer to SDS page 1. Minister, do you consider the coronial counsellors at the John Tonge Centre are providing a front-line service? If you do not, who will now support those grieving families who are brought in and asked to identify deceased family members in very traumatic circumstances?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** There is no doubt that there are people who require assistance with regards to counselling in a whole range of areas. Of course, people working in those areas provide a very important service. That is not to say that those particular services cannot be provided in some other way as well. Indeed—

**Mrs MILLER:** So you are going to privatise?

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Indeed, our predecessors, who sit over there, were so concerned about councillors that they were prepared to let at least one of them go. I identified them in the information I tabled in parliament going back a couple of months. There were people they openly sought out to actually leave the employ of Queensland Health; councillors in those sorts of circumstances. That was their concern about those people at that particular stage. What is being said by the honourable member opposite now is certainly not embedded in any way on their past performance when it comes to actually expressing concern about retaining those people. I am very confident that we will be able to ensure that people's emotional and other needs are met.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you will outsource it, in other words?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, do you have a question?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes. My question is to the minister in relation to his previous answer. Do you intend to outsource that service?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have indicated to the honourable member that I am sure that we will be able to meet the emotional needs of people, as Queensland Health does in so many ways.

**Mrs MILLER:** So you will not say yes or no?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I have answered the question, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** Minister, I refer to page 36 of the service delivery statement and the reference to the industrial agreement reached with the Queensland Nurses Union shortly after you took office. I ask: is the fact that you made a priority of resolving this longstanding matter a reflection of the importance that the nurses play in our health system?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Absolutely it is. There is no doubt that Queensland nurses and midwives are the backbone of our health and hospital system. There are about 32,000 nurses and midwives who work within Queensland Health. Obviously, many more work in the private sector and in other facets of the community. We all appreciate, respect and admire the level of care that is provided by Queensland nurses and midwives. One of the commitments of the Premier was that, when we came to government, we would move very quickly to resolve the outstanding negotiations with nurses and midwives in this state with regards to their EBA, otherwise known as EB8. That is something that I very quickly committed myself to. We were able to reach an agreement in principle very quickly, within the first couple of weeks.

The exposure to the state, the amount of new initiative funding, was 2.5 per cent from the Treasury and 0.66 per cent in productivity improvements. They have indicated that they would be happy to work to ensure that that can be delivered across the workforce. We are going to do things against the business planning framework, which is very important to Queensland nurses and midwives. It will mean that we look at the ratio of people and we will also look at the ratio of enrolled nurses to registered nurses. Other very important things such as criteria-led discharge are a part of that agreement.

I can indicate that I am dead set serious about the issue of criteria-led discharge. It is used routinely in the private and not-for-profit health sector to great effect to free up access to beds. Also, we have trialled it at 10 sites throughout Queensland, which has been very successful. Indeed, it works in an informal way in many of our hospitals across the state, particularly our smaller hospitals where you have very close, unsiloed arrangements between nurses and medicos as well. We think that that is absolutely crucial to freeing up beds in Queensland. We have nurses who are highly qualified clinically. They have extraordinary levels of skills that they acquire through the additional training that they do along the way. We should be able to use that.

Frankly, I am more than confident that nurses have the capability and they have the training to be able to know, against a set of criteria, when somebody should be discharged from hospital. One of the big issues that we have at the moment is that if somebody comes in on a Friday or they might have been a longer-stay patient, over the weekend we may know that they can be discharged, but we have to wait for their treating doctor to come in to do that. Sometimes that will not be until Monday, so they may end up being in hospital for two or three days longer than they need to be, holding a bed. That can be a particular issue on a Monday, when we have the greatest problem with bed block and access in our hospitals.

Do I trust nurses to do that? Absolutely. Do I trust midwives to do even more than what we have been encouraging them to do and to expand their role in the community? Absolutely I do. I think they do a wonderful job. The EB is a recognition of that. Again, I think it is testament to the fact that not only are we prepared to pay our nurses more, but also it is a part of the commitment of the LNP to make sure that we actually pay them, despite the bungled payroll system in Queensland, of which the honourable member for Bundamba and others do not want to take any responsibility.

**CHAIR:** Minister, with reference to the LNP election commitment to improve access to specialist care, as outlined on page 2 of the SDS, can you advise how this will be reported to the public so that we can track delivery of this \$12 million budget commitment?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Certainly, Mr Chairman. We have made a very strong commitment to enhancing services in Queensland. This also means that we are going to put more effort into transparency around elective surgery in this state. We do have pretty good elective surgery vis-a-vis the rest of Australia, but we need to do more in that area. One of the issues that has not been properly addressed over a long period is the number of long waits and also the issue of people who are waiting for an outpatient appointment. In that area the LNP will be making a significant commitment of some \$14 million to ensure an additional 40,000-odd specialist outpatient appointments. We believe that will very much help when it comes to the issue of addressing some of those medical dilemmas for many people in Queensland.

The government has committed to treating elective surgery patients who have waited longer than clinically recommended through the Surgery Connect program. Eligible elective surgery long-wait patients are treated through private outsourcing arrangements and an additional 8,000 procedures will be provided over the next four years through public/private partnerships at a total cost of \$55 million. That will be approximately 2,000 procedures at \$13.75 million per annum. This will reduce pressure on public hospitals, allowing them to focus on delivering access to emergency care for Queenslanders.

We are going to make sure that the program will target the following areas of high demand: endoscopy services, ophthalmology services especially in rural and regional areas, long-wait elective surgery patients as I mentioned earlier on, and some of those people might be able to be dealt with through redesigning our process in that area. As the director-general indicates to me, if we just do more people in turn there is a real chance to be able to address that as well. We will be reporting more to the public. I have already indicated to boards that I want up-to-date information on elective surgery waiting lists, the wait lists for people to have an outpatient appointment and also the dental wait list. Much of that is starting to roll out as well. Yes, people will be able to judge.

Do we believe we will fix every dilemma in health? No, I do not think anyone out there has a magic wand on this, but it is about an efficient and effective use of our money and ensuring that, through proper smart service redesign, clinician engagement and targeting our programs, we can give even better outcomes.

**Mr TROUT:** Minister, I refer to page 4 of the service delivery statement and, in particular, to the dot point that relates to the commitment to put the Cairns Base Hospital on the path to tier 1 status. With additional funding of \$15 million over four years to enable the recruitment of extra specialists to revitalise front-line services, can the minister inform the committee what action has been taken to implement this commitment?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Barron River for his interest in this area. Obviously it is very profound because he was one of the driving forces behind this commitment from the LNP. As he quite correctly indicates, there is a \$15 million commitment from the LNP over four years to actually enhance the specialist services that are provided from the Cairns Base Hospital and we believe some great start has already been made in that area. Indeed, when I became minister I travelled to Cairns to announce the commitment of the first \$4 million of that \$15 million round. I understand the HHS is already doing an absolutely wonderful job in making sure that services can be enhanced for the people of Cairns and Far North Queensland. The Cairns Base Hospital has an extraordinarily large catchment, as the honourable member knows. It services people right across North and Far North Queensland. In actual fact, it services patients who come from Papua New Guinea. That shows the reach and the extent of the Cairns hospital and what it does. With regards to the first instalment of \$4 million, I understand that there has already been some commitment and interest in the area of gastroenterology, cardiology, neurology and plastic surgery. I understand—although I stand to be corrected—that there has been some interest in trying to also enhance urology in Cairns, but that is a work in progress. This is the first stage of that \$15 million commitment but it will do a lot to ensure that highly specialised services are delivered in their local hospital without the need to travel. That will give a greater degree of confidence for further investment in health care in that area.

**Mrs MILLER:** I refer to the SDS at page 2. Minister, when you decided to stop funding of \$223,094 to the Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan community managed child and maternal health service were you aware that this service had won the 2011 Annual Excellence in Indigenous Health Award and that the service was a key component of the strategy to reduce infant mortality rates in Cape York? I would like to table a copy of the award for the benefit of the committee.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** As I indicated earlier on, I am leaving absolutely no stone unturned to ensure that we are actually getting the best service delivery from organisations that we actually fund. I think that was finite funding. If the honourable member opposite felt that that organisation should be funded beyond then then that funding agreement should not have actually ceased on 30 June.

**Mrs MILLER:** You had every opportunity to continue it, but you did not.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Well—

**Mrs MILLER:** No, you didn't.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** If all of these organisations need to be funded ad infinitum then the honourable member should have had arrangements in place that meant it cuts off in 2020 or whenever.

**Mrs MILLER:** This organisation does an excellent job and you have taken the money off them.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Most organisations funded by any government have a finite funding window which does not guarantee funding beyond then under any circumstances otherwise the funding would just continue on and on and on. I have indicated that I want to put a greater set of criteria around the way the services that we contract are actually delivered. It is going to be more a service agreement rather than a gratuity in the area of grants. However, I am also in discussions with other organisations, particularly Indigenous primary healthcare organisations, about how we can use their skill and their economies of scale to ensure that we can get greater transparency and greater continuity and consistency of care which can be replicated right throughout Queensland in the areas that we continue to be involved in.

Glenn Poole will guide us very much with regard to the types of service agreements we need and the process for application, assessment and approval. That is what we will be doing. We will be ensuring that we get better outcomes in the future from these funds.

**Mrs MILLER:** My question is to the director-general. I refer to the SDS at page 1. Director-General, how much has it cost for Queensland Health to engage legal representation at dispute conferences? Has Queensland Health previously needed legal representation in dealing with dispute resolutions with its employees or is this new?

**Dr O'Connell:** We have previously used legal assistance in our dealings in the industrial commission. I would need to check that. I would ask the minister to seek approval from the chair to treat that as a question on notice in terms of the exact amount for that particular activity. I do not have that in front of me.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question. Is there an LNP mates rates deal in relation to McCullough Robertson?

**Dr O'Connell:** I am not aware of any mates rates in any of the dealings that Queensland Health has.

**Mrs MILLER:** Have you accepted any hospitality from McCullough Robertson over the years that you have been an MP?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Possibly. I am more than happy to actually check that. I meet with so many different organisations and groups, attend boardroom functions, get lobbied by people and meet with people. I would not be surprised if I had certainly met with people from that organisation over a period of time.

**Mrs MILLER:** Will you take that on notice and get back to us?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I am more than happy to. When it comes to mates rates we are dealing with a party that is the practitioner of mates rates. They hook the mates onto the gravy train like you would not believe.

**Mrs MILLER:** You are in government now, Minister.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** A few years ago they were straight out of parliament and straight back through the door. It was the greatest mates rates exercise you have ever seen. That has actually meant that we have had to have things such as a lobbyist register in Queensland and all those sorts of things.

I can tell you what we are doing, and that is we are moving to ensure that we are actually getting better value out of the people we actually retain to provide services for us, whether they be legal service providers or others in big accounting firms. I have had some discussions with them in recent times and they have basically inferred that it was a gravy train under the previous government. There is no doubt about that. They knew absolutely no bounds. Taxpayers' money was not something that actually deterred the previous government from expenditure. We are tightening up on a whole range of those things. I am more than happy to provide any of the details of that that the honourable member might like.

That is the third one for transparency, openness and accountability. I encourage the honourable member opposite to try for No. 1. She could try for No. 1 by supporting an inquiry which brings the IBM people—

**Mrs MILLER:** And you could walk up the road 450 metres instead of being lazy.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Will you provide me with some gaffer tape. I might as well put it on now, honourable member.

**Mrs MILLER:** Get your walking shoes on.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I can't tell anyone, can't see, can't hear, can't relay it out there.

**Mrs MILLER:** Get your joggers on. You are a runner, aren't you?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** All the caveats—

**Mrs MILLER:** It would take you less than five minutes if you ran up the road.

**CHAIR:** Order! Member for Bundamba.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** It makes you wonder what has actually been hidden there. It must be really salacious and juicy. Who really knows what is going on there. Transparency and openness are No. 3. The honourable member for Bundamba could try for No. 1—to have an inquiry into what the unions have to tell us, what IBM have to tell us and release the payroll advice so we can save some of those 1,300 jobs which will be lost which are directly attributable to the honourable member—

**Mrs MILLER:** You release your cabinet submissions to me since you have been minister.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, do you have another question?

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, I do. My question is to the director-general, Dr Tony O'Connell, and relates to the SDS at page 3—additional funding for BreastScreen Queensland. Given the cuts to state-wide service coordination, workforce management and programs promoting community and clinical awareness for BreastScreen Queensland, how confident are you that 16 hospital and health service boards will allocate sufficient resources and have sufficient expertise to promote and deliver this important women's health program?

**Dr O'Connell:** I am completely confident that the hospital and health services, under the governance of a board, will be able to deliver front-line services much more effectively than corporate office from Charlotte Street would be able to deliver front-line services. The recent changes to the arrangements with BreastScreen Queensland will in no way result in the abolition of the breast screen program. Queensland has been very successful with its breast screen program, having better results in terms of uptake than any of the other states except perhaps South Australia. We are very keen to continue that. As I think the minister mentioned previously, some of the money which we have

recovered from the alleged fraud will be used to increase breast screening services. Every year we have been increasing the breast screening arrangements. We are also using federal funding of \$8.9 million operational capital this year under the implementation plan for digital technology which is going to allow us to fully transition to digital technology for breast screening across Queensland.

**Mrs MILLER:** Well the health profession does not share your confidence.

**CHAIR:** I am going to move to the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** On page 27 of the SDS it refers to the capital program. Would the minister like to comment on the state of the maintenance backlog faced by health and hospital services and what the health and hospital services could do to help resolve this issue?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** As the honourable member is probably aware based on my comments in parliament previously, there have been some very serious issues with regard to backlogs of maintenance and also some very serious outstanding issues with regard to what can potentially be life-threatening refurbishment and maintenance which was not done by the previous government.

One of the things that was brought to our attention very early on in our tenure was a status report for 12 rural and regional hospitals around Queensland from Thursday Island down through Atherton and Mareeba and right down to Kingaroy and out to places like Roma. We were able to reprioritise funding in order to give enough money for bare bones maintenance for those hospitals in Queensland—some \$51 million. That information was provided to the previous government two years before we came into office.

What we need to do now is to go through a comprehensive refurbishment program that will possibly mean the redesign and major reconstruction or even rebuilding of those hospitals. The Queensland Commission of Audit interim report dated June 2012 noted that Queensland Health has a \$324 million backlog maintenance liability as at 31 December 2011 and QH would address that liability within a four-year period. That is what they actually noticed.

Queensland Health has set a maintenance expenditure target of 2.15 per cent per annum of the undepreciated building asset replacement value. Due to the complex and specialised nature of QH facilities, the QH maintenance expenditure target exceeds the one per cent per annum minimum set by whole-of-government maintenance policy requirements which is intended for general commercial buildings. In 2011-12 the total HHS maintenance expenditure was 1.59 per cent of undepreciated building ARV. This is below the target maintenance expenditure level of 2.15 per cent. The underspend by HHS has also contributed to an increase in the backlog of maintenance liability.

What we have to do is to actually support our HHSs as they go through a very difficult process of enhancing their maintenance programs. It is very difficult. They are going through serious system design and dealing with some of the legacy issues we have. We have indicated, honourable member for Townsville, not only with the maintenance schedule where we have this enormous backlog but also with the dozen hospitals or more around the state—because there are others where there are emerging issues—that we have to put some effort into those with major rebuilds in the future.

**CHAIR:** I refer to page 94 of the SDS which relates to the Gold Coast Hospital and health service. Could you please inform the committee of the progress of the new Gold Coast University Hospital and an estimated completion date for that project?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Thank you very much for the question. I do acknowledge that this is an excellent project. I also acknowledge that this project had its genius prior to us coming into office. It is important to meet the ongoing healthcare needs of the people of the Gold Coast and to make sure that we do have a facility that can provide the best quality of health care for the people of the Gold Coast and surrounds.

The budget for the hospital was \$1.76 billion. The original anticipated date for practical completion was the end of this calendar year. We were supposed to take over that building at that particular time, which would allow us to fit it out both in terms of IT and other things to make sure we could start putting patients in there by about the middle of next year, which is the end of the next financial year.

There are some challenges. One of those challenges has been the collapse of the Hastie Group in recent times. This has actually pushed back the practical completion date probably into February. There are also some issues with regard to the IT fitout as well. It is more likely now that the date that that hospital will be taking patients will be sometime in around September next year. But we will be working hard to do what we can to address some of the issues which come about as a consequence of the collapse of the Hastie Group. They are unforeseen. No-one can actually deal with those.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** I refer to Budget Paper No. 2 page 91. I ask the director-general, in reference to the letter from the QCU that the minister tabled earlier about attempts by union members and officials to warn the government about the Health payroll risks, and in particular the letter states—

These attempts were in fact blocked by senior officials of the department who dismissed union members' and officials' quite realistic apprehensions as scaremongering.

Director-general, would you be able to advise the committee please who were these senior officials? I note that you were part of this executive management team. So who were these senior officials? And will the director-general—

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** I raise a point of order.

**CHAIR:** I will take a point of order.

**Mrs MILLER:**—order an investigation based on this information tabled by the minister?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I will take the point of order. I call the member for Ferny Grove on a point of order.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** Mr Chair, I believe the member for Bundamba just indicated that the minister said when in fact the minister was reading from a letter from the Council of Unions.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes and that is what I quoted.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** Mr Monaghan actually said, as opposed the minister.

**Mrs MILLER:** I quoted from the letter.

**CHAIR:** Your point of order is taken. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-general, you heard my question?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes.

**Mrs MILLER:** I was just wondering if you would be able to answer that please.

**Dr O'Connell:** Firstly with regard to the issue of me being—

**Mrs MILLER:** No, no. Who were the senior officials?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba.

**Dr O'Connell:** No. You also made the statement that I was a member of the team.

**Mrs MILLER:** The executive management team.

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba.

**Dr O'Connell:** I was not necessarily a member of the executive management team at the time. I came to Queensland about three years ago. This project of installing the payroll commenced before that time. It is not clear from the letter that you have read out at what time and to whom, and whether this was verbal or written, Mr Monaghan communicated with officers within my department. So I am unable to help you with regard to who those officers are.

What I can refer to is that the Auditor-General has already tabled a report in parliament about the payroll fiasco and has made it clear that one of the issues with the implementation that was faulty was the lack of governance within the arrangements with a number of parties being involved. The minister has already referred to questions about the role of private parties such as IBM. So, without speaking to Mr Monaghan, I am not aware of who he is referring to.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, are you prepared to pick up the phone and speak to Mr Monaghan so that you can get to the bottom of who these senior officials are?

**Mr DAVIES:** We wanted to bring him here. We wanted him here.

**Mrs MILLER:** SDS page 1—Budget Paper No. 2.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I could bring him in. I didn't think you wanted to bring him in before.

**CHAIR:** We cannot examine Mr Monaghan in this forum.

**Mrs MILLER:** No, no. I am asking the director-general—

**Mr DAVIES:** We wanted to get him here.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** The member for Bundamba didn't support our motion.

**CHAIR:** Order.

**Mrs MILLER:**—will he pick up the phone and speak to Mr Monaghan to get to the bottom of it.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I reckon we should speak publicly. It would be wonderful here for everyone to see. Mr Monaghan could come here—

**Mrs MILLER:** No, no.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:**—and he could actually ventilate all his concerns.

**CHAIR:** What a wonderful transparent arrangement.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Certainly there are a whole range of people who are on the consultation list. We had the Nurses Union—Beth Mohle, Des Elder, Juliana Virine. We had Alex Scott, Julie Bignell, Danielle Cohen. We have so many people and Ron Monaghan was on there. We could actually bring them in. I think it should be all done openly and transparently.

**Mrs MILLER:** The director-general is responsible, Minister, for the efficient running of the department.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, the minister is answering the question.

**Mrs MILLER:** He is responsible for this particular budget. Are you prepared to ring Mr Monaghan?

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question. If you don't want to hear the answer, don't ask the question.

**Mrs MILLER:** I didn't ask him; I asked the director-general. You weren't listening again.

**CHAIR:** Is that an imputation of the chair for the third time?

**Mrs MILLER:** No.

**CHAIR:** I certainly felt it was. I ask you to withdraw immediately.

**Mrs MILLER:** I withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I call the minister.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chairman, better still, I think Mr Monaghan should actually have the chance to ventilate his concerns publicly and so should the people associated with IBM. This has been the whole point, rather than having things behind closed doors, whispering and things that cannot be tested.

Indeed this is a very interesting payroll system. I cannot find one signature from anyone in Queensland Health on this. It started its life somewhere else away from where we were—CorpTech, a previous Under Treasurer in Queensland as well and IBM. It is interesting that other ministers were probably involved at that particular level. I find a whole range of people in my department who actually counselled against the introduction of this system but, despite that, the previous government forged ahead with it. It would be most instructive to have public ventilation of who has actually been involved in this process.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Oh, thank you very much—the most wonderful chair of this committee! I have a question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, if at any time I treat you with anything other than respect I will take that disdain with which you addressed the chair. Until then, please be courteous and respectful. We will find this a much easier process if you can simply adhere to general rules of courtesy and politeness. I call the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you so much. Director-General—

**A government member** interjected.

**Mrs MILLER:** Excuse me.

**CHAIR:** I called the member for Bundamba.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes and he interjected.

**CHAIR:** I called the member for Bundamba. You have the call.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you so much, Chair. My question is to the director-general. I refer to the KPMG report tabled by the minister on 6 June 2012 and also to SDS page 1. Does the director-general view this report as having the status of an audit similar to one conducted by the Auditor-General?

**Dr O'Connell:** The report is a very thorough analysis of the issues. It was done in a relatively short period of time but it provides a wealth of useful information to advise the department on the way forward with regard to the numerous elements of a correction strategy to get the department back on track with regard to payroll. KPMG themselves would not say that this was an audit in the true sense of the word. But I am totally comfortable that it adequately addresses the government's requirement to in a very short period of time be appraised of the situation with regard to this enormous fiasco within Queensland Health in the early days of coming to power.

**Mrs MILLER:** Thank you. Through the chair, to the director-general, can you confirm that the costs of operating a complex rostering and payroll system for more than 80,000 Queensland Health staff will be approximately \$1 billion over eight years between 2010 and 2017?

**Dr O'Connell:** The minister is happy to answer that question.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Mr Chairman, I am more than happy to answer that question. This is also a part of public record and can actually go back to the report which was on my desk when I came in as minister and was freely available to the previous government as well. That is one of the reasons that I initiated KPMG to look at it. I looked at these figures which were available to the previous government and I just could not believe what was sitting on my desk which indicated a \$1.25 billion cost of this

system out to 2017. If the honourable member looks at the KPMG report, it clearly indicates the expected cost of running a Health payroll system as complex as this without any award changes and those sorts of things was in the vicinity of \$50 million a year.

So, if you are looking at that, over an eight-year period that is around \$400 million on top of the contract price of \$6 million for the payroll rollout, which leaves an enormous deficiency of over \$800 million in the proposition put forward by the honourable member. The flow charts show that clearly. It showed it clearly in what was available to the previous government and it showed it clearly in what was available to KPMG. The operational cost should have been in the vicinity of \$50 million a year. After we put the corrections in place over the next two to three years, we start to actually settle near the realistic operational cost. But maybe the beefed up Labor version, which is always to pay four or five or 20,000 times as much, you might actually get to billions of dollars a year. But it should be around \$48 million to \$50 million a year.

**Mrs MILLER:** Through the chair—

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mrs MILLER:** I have a follow-up question though, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am moving to the member for Ferny Grove. We can come back to you.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** Minister, I refer to page 4 of the Service Delivery Statement and the commitment to commence the Sunshine Coast University Hospital without delay. I ask the minister if this commitment has been met?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Ferny Grove. This has been very much one of the solid commitments from the LNP. This is something that our members on the Sunshine Coast have been agitating for and being very successfully pushing now for a number of years, and I certainly pay tribute to them for that particular work which they have done in that area.

Indeed it is on time. We have had the sod turning. The Premier was up there the other day and actually did that sod turning. We indicated that we would be looking at starting that work some time this year. We resolved the contract issues very quickly after coming to government. Indeed, we had a look at the previous government's contract. It is around a PPP or what they were proposing. They were proposing to build it and amortise that over a 20-year period of time for over \$2 billion. We were able to go into further discussions with the proponents, and we have been able to reduce that cost by \$250 million over the life of that contract. So it is actually great news for the people of the Sunshine Coast and great news for the people of Queensland as well.

We propose to bring that online in the year 2016. I think it starts out with about 450 public beds, which will grow to 730 beds by 2021. It is co-located with Ramsay Health Care and Ramsay Health Care will be helping us out when they bring their co-located private facility online—I think it starts next year—with 70 beds available to us, rising to around 110 beds, and then of course our own facility will come on board some time after that. This is great news.

The other thing is that this is the first new hospital of its type built in Australia in 20 years and not a replacement hospital. So it is really good news. We were able to sharpen the pencil when we came to government and shave \$250 million off the price of that contract over the life of it. The great thing about it of course is that it is being delivered as a PPP, which is an indication of the way we need to go in the future.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I refer you to page 27 of the SDS which relates to capital works. Could you please give the committee a summary of the progress made with respect to the Queensland Children's Hospital and any issues that might have arisen that have impacted upon such progress including associated costs?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for the question. This hospital started its life a number of years ago as an interesting concept. Certainly the coalition at the time was an advocate before our predecessors of the need to consolidate our paediatric services into one new facility, preferably at a greenfield site. It was something that was then picked up by our predecessors in Queensland and it has grown from there. It started its life as a project which was supposed to cost around \$690 million. The cost now is getting up towards \$1.5 billion, and once again that is the due diligence of our predecessors in Queensland. Again they would argue that you judge everything on expenditure, not timely, cost-effective delivery.

There is also no doubt that we had some reticence about it. I and the assistant minister and a whole range of people would have not liked this decision to have been made the way it was made, but the decision has been made. We accept it, we support it and we are going to make it work. There is no doubt there will be more beds and it should provide better and more extensive paediatric services with greater capability than what we have at the moment. That is the reality. It is locked in and it is happening, and we all accept that.

There have been some issues as well. Obviously the industrial action, or the fake industrial action—the Clayton's industrial action, because it was supposed to be a community protest, not necessarily full industrial action because it was illegal under Fair Work Australia—which was endured by Abigroup has certainly pushed back the completion date possibly as much as 10 or 12 weeks. That may have an impact on our ability to be able to access that facility in a timely manner to be able to start the fit-out at the end of the practical completion.

The other thing—and it is very difficult to calculate at this stage—is that, like all projects, there are incentive payments built in. There are bonuses which can be shared between the contractor and the line agency, which is Queensland Health, for bringing these projects in ahead of time and basically ahead of budget if you can do it. That is very difficult with this one, but there are some potential incentive payments. The fact that we have now lost up to three months means that the amount we get at the end may be very small, if any. We might be able to report back to this committee next year on that.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, I note that the Auditor-General has said—and I will table this letter soon—that \$1.008 billion will be spent to 2017 maintaining—in other words, operating—the payroll system and that \$245.5 million will be spent determining the longer term solution for the payroll system. I table this letter from the Auditor-General. Director-General, do you agree with those figures or do you think it is in the interests of honesty and transparency for the minister to be running around peddling the view that over \$1 billion will be spent fixing the system? Because clearly that is wrong. Director-General, can you please enlighten the committee as to the truthfulness in relation to this expenditure in terms of the operating costs as well as the cost of fixing the system?

**Dr O'Connell:** Yes, I can detail some of the elements which constitute the \$1.253 billion which KPMG estimated. \$416.6 million was estimated to be incurred by the end of June 2012 and a further \$836.9 million was forecast to be spent in financial years 2012-13 through 2016-17, of which \$537 million is currently unfunded. \$220.5 million was estimated to fund six key projects designed to address the nine high-priority issues which KPMG identified including the overpayments recovery, the pay date change, the payroll self-service, investigating alternative rostering and payroll solutions, and localising payroll services. \$25 million has been estimated to assess alternative rostering and payroll solutions and determine whether the existing solutions should be upgraded or reimplemented. Clearly, both parties here are making predictions about how much will be spent over a significant period of time. So one would expect that there might be some differences. What I would say is that the KPMG report is subsequent to the Auditor-General's previous comments. KPMG has had the benefit of more information to inform its predictions about what will be required.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, as a follow-up, what would be the annual cost of operating the payroll system, bearing in mind that the minister has been talking about a billion dollars? The billion dollars is not to fix the payroll system but to fund the day-to-day running of the payroll system, which obviously the minister does not understand.

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Which cost \$180 million more this year to run than you budgeted for.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, can you please tell me how much the operating cost on an annual basis will be for the payroll system?

**Dr O'Connell:** The minister has already answered that question by talking about—

**Mrs MILLER:** I am asking you as the director-general, and I am able to ask you under the standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, you have asked the question. Will you at least give the director-general a chance to answer?

**Dr O'Connell:** What I can tell you are the actuals for the last financial year, 2011-12. The KPMG report estimated that the operational funding would be \$157.5 million required. The QH actual is \$159.1 million, so a small difference. The actual expenditure includes all payroll services, which is \$96.7 million, the payroll release program, which is \$7.2 million, and shared services, which is \$49.5 million.

The KPMG report was released in May 2012, which meant that it did rely on two months of forecast expenditure for May and June. Then for last year there was an investment in projects. KPMG estimated that would be \$44.4 million. We were able to get them done for \$35 million. So, again, we see some minor inaccuracies due to the fact that KPMG was predicting, as was the Auditor-General, but it gives an idea of the kind of cost of running a system.

Of course, it is very difficult to tease out what is day-to-day operational funding and what is the funding required to have an ongoing improvement in the system, because each new release of the system—and we have one about every two to three months—you could consider either to be operational in the sense of ongoing finetuning or you could call it a project to improve the quality of the whole system, which was certainly dysfunctional in the beginning but which has been increasingly more functional as this massive investment of effort has been put into it.

**Mrs MILLER:** Director-General, have you ever advised the minister that what he has been saying publicly about this enormous cost, which we now know relates mostly to the operating system, has been misleading the public?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, I have not advised him in that regard.

**Mrs MILLER:** Has he asked you?

**Dr O'Connell:** No, I have not done that because I do not believe that he has been deceitful in this at all. The KPMG report, as I said before—

**Mrs MILLER:** So have you been deceitful?

**Dr O'Connell:** The KPMG report, which, as I said before, I have complete faith in, says that the total cost for the period of time which it was predicting it would be was \$1.253 billion, and that is the figure which the minister has been using.

**Mrs MILLER:** Yes, but there is a substantial operating cost in that, and that figure is over a period of eight years when mostly in government the forward estimates run for only four years. So to make the figure look much worse it has been quoted over eight years rather than four years.

**Dr O'Connell:** I have never heard the minister mislead people with regard to the figures that he is using. He has always used it in the terms of the KPMG report and the KPMG report is quite clear about the time lines.

**Mrs MILLER:** The minister has not separated out the operating costs—

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** Yes, I have.

**Mrs MILLER:**—from the costs to fix the system.

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundamba, I heard the minister do that twice, quite deliberately separating out the costs over the out years versus maintenance and other costs. I call the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** My question is for the minister. Minister, as outlined on page 4 of the SDS, can you advise on the progress taken towards delivery of the Townsville paediatric intensive care unit resulting from the LNP's election commitment pledge of \$14.75 million?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Townsville for the question. I thank him and his colleagues in Townsville for their very strong and strident advocacy in this area. This is something which is very important to the people of Townsville and North Queensland. This paediatric intensive care unit is something which has very strong support within the community. Our ability to properly treat children with intense needs in North Queensland is a very important part of providing the advanced paediatric services that we need. This will also result in fewer children having to be flown to a similar facility in Brisbane, which of course is going to reduce the trauma on them and the trauma on their families.

One of the commitments I made was to ensure that we get this up and running as quickly as we possibly can. The service will be open 24/7. We will be collaborating closely with the metropolitan paediatric intensive care service. A retrieval service model is also under consideration, because this service is going to have a significant catchment area of children who may have come into our major metropolitan facilities. There will be utilisation audits at six and 12 months. The continuation of paediatric surgical services are now very secure.

This service no doubt is going to grow over a particular period of time. If we can look at the previous year's comparison in Townsville, paediatric admissions in 2011-12 were 88. In the year to date this was 50. So we can see there is a significant demand for this in the area. With regard to the commencement of the service, it started in September 2012. Staff recruitment to the service included two FTE staff specialists, another FTE, one full-time clinical nurse consultant and another six FTEs in the nursing areas. There is also allied health recruitment to commence in January 2013. There have been 22 paediatric admissions following the commencement of the service over a six-week period including nine ventilated children. So the service is needed. It is there, it is utilised, and no doubt it will grow in capacity over a period of time. It again proves the commitment of the LNP in ensuring we have these advanced clinical services in rural and regional areas of Queensland.

**CHAIR:** I remind the minister of the time as I bravely call the final question to the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** Minister, I refer to page 7 of the SDS and the Queensland Mental Health Commission which states—

Queensland Health is progressing the Government's commitment to establish an independent Queensland Mental Health Commission to drive reform in the planning and delivery of mental health services in Queensland.

Would you please advise the committee of the progress of the independent Mental Health Commission and detail how it will improve the lives of Queenslanders experiencing mental health problems?

**Mr SPRINGBORG:** I thank the honourable member for Ferny Grove for the question. I do not think there would be a member of the committee or a member of parliament who has not been touched in some way by a family member or friend who has been affected by mental illness. If we look at the expenditure in Queensland in this area over a period of time, I think it is around about a billion dollars a year. Obviously that will have to enhance over a period of time. The previous government had a proposal for a Mental Health Commission in Queensland which it was progressing. We have a proposal for a Mental Health Commission which we of course will be implementing, as we are now the incumbent government. The models will be a little different. We are going to base ours on the New South Wales experience, which will be a very lean and focused Mental Health Commission that will support them in making sure they provide the best policy advice and advice on coordination of mental health and support services right across government. New South Wales based its model on New Zealand's model. I was there a couple of weeks ago, and everyone was singing the praises as to the success and the leanness of it. It has been very much focused on working with the NGO sector to deliver mental health services more and more in the community sector.

We will be going through a short period of online consultation later this month, and we will be aiming to introduce legislation by the end of this year. No doubt it will go before a parliamentary committee for scrutiny and obviously report back to the parliament. We would be looking at the passage of legislation through parliament in the first quarter of next year and the establishment subsequent to that. We believe it is very important in driving overall mental health policy in Queensland for the future.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of the portfolio of the Minister for Health has expired. I understand—and there will be some clarification that we will seek later—that there are either three or four questions on notice that you will receive in due course. I thank the minister, the CEOs of the statutory bodies and departmental officers for your attendance. The transcript of this part of the hearing will be available on the parliamentary website later this evening. The committee will now break for dinner. The hearing will resume at 7 pm with the examination of the budget estimates within the portfolio of Community Services, Child Safety and Disabilities.

**Proceedings suspended from 5.59 pm to 7.00 pm**

## **ESTIMATES—HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE— COMMUNITY SERVICES, CHILD SAFETY AND DISABILITY SERVICES**

### **In Attendance**

Hon. T Davis, Minister for Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services

Mr M Molhoek, Assistant Minister for Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services

Mr M Read, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services**

Ms M Allison, Director-General

Mr B Swan, Deputy Director-General (Acting), Strategic Policy and Programs

Mr A O'Brien, Chief Finance Officer

Dr J Chan, Chief Practitioner, Disability

#### **Commission for Children, Young People and Child Guardian**

Ms E Fraser, Commissioner

Mr B Salmon, Deputy Commissioner



**CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, the CEOs of statutory bodies, departmental officers and members of the public to the hearing. I am Peter Dowling MP, the member for Redlands. I chair the committee. Mrs Jo-Ann Miller MP, the member for Bundamba, is the deputy chair but she will not be joining us this evening. Other members of the committee are: Mr Steve Davies MP, the member for Capalaba; Mr Aaron Dillaway MP, the member for Bulimba; Mr John Hathaway MP, the member for Townsville; Mrs Desley Scott MP, the member for Woodridge; Mr Dale Shuttleworth MP, the member for Ferny Grove; and Mr Michael Trout MP, the member for Barron River. I also acknowledge a visiting member present, the member for Inala, Ms Anastacia Palaszczuk.

The committee will examine the appropriation for the minister's portfolio from 7 pm until 9.30. I remind those present this evening that these proceedings are similar to parliament to the extent that the public cannot participate in the proceedings. I remind members of the public that under standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

The committee has resolved that the whole of the proceedings of the committee may be broadcast in line with the conditions for broadcasters and guidelines for camera operators, which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in this room. Please switch off mobile phones or pagers or switch them to silent. Also, I remind you that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. I intend to guide proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure that there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers and their departmental advisors that their answers to questions should be finalised so that other issues can be examined. The committee has resolved that non-committee members be given leave to attend and ask questions during the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask the departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by a minister or director-general.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services open for examination. The time allocated is two hours and 30 minutes. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity. Can I start by acknowledging my Assistant Minister for Child Safety, Mr Rob Molhoek. I acknowledge the director-general, Margaret Allison, and the departmental staff who are here this evening, as well as Michael Read, my chief of staff, and other members of my ministerial staff. I recognise the commissioner for children, Elizabeth Fraser; deputy commissioner, Barry Salmon, and chief practitioner, Dr Jeffrey Chan. I would like to offer a welcome in advance and a thank you to the Auslan interpreters who will be present during the Disability Services section of the proceedings here tonight.

From the outset, can I say that the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services will continue to focus on providing essential front-line support and services for people most in need. In 2012-13 this means providing an overall budget of \$2.564 billion, including \$1.756 billion in grants and subsidies. This year we have a record spend of \$959 million for specialist disability services, and we are also seeing additional funding for child safety of \$140 million over four years to address a funding black hole left to us by the former Labor government. I am absolutely delighted that state funding for specialist disability services has increased by three per cent from almost \$931 million in 2011-12 to almost \$959 million in 2012-13.

As a government, we have announced the Your Life Your Choice trial. This trial of self-directed funding will provide greater choice and control for people with a disability over the specialist funding and supports that they receive. This is a very positive step forward for people with a disability, their carers and their families and it ensures Queensland keeps pace with similar developments interstate and internationally. It will also enable a systematic and methodical preparation for any eventual National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Another exciting announcement in the disability area is our Elderly Parent Carer Innovation Trial. Queensland Treasury has provided \$15 million over three years to draw innovative ideas from the community sector as to how we provide options to older parents as they consider their child's future when they can no longer provide care for them. I can inform the committee that the announcement has been extremely well received.

The 2012-13 budget also sees us deliver \$4 million over the next four years toward the Parent Connect initiative to help up to 440 parents of children with a disability or developmental delay each year during the first 12 months following a diagnosis. Some \$5.5 million is being provided in new respite funding targeting young people with high-needs disability aged between 16 and 25 and their families.

Mr Chair, with regard to Child Safety, as I said we inherited a funding black hole of \$72 million from 2011-12. This money was being expended on fee-for-service transitional placement programs to NGOs that the former government funded by quarantining Child Safety grant savings along with other departmental funding transfers. Not only have we had to plug this black hole, we have taken the responsible step of providing \$59.8 million this financial year towards the ongoing cost of transitional placements for children who require these types of interim out-of-home care placements. This is in addition to reprioritising \$19 million in child safety and social inclusion services growth funding to fully fund the estimated \$78 million in costs to support these children.

In Child Safety Services, this government has committed \$4 million to child fostering families in Queensland to help at-risk families and their children. This is the first family support program of its type in Queensland designed specifically to target childhood neglect. Child Safety Services will also receive \$1.5 million over four years to provide increased counselling services for victims of child abuse and sexual assault. This initiative will also provide children living in regional areas access to a telephone support line which will provide around the clock counselling and support.

I would also like to highlight that my department will be providing \$4 million over the next three years for the Caring for our Community small grants initiative. This initiative will support community and volunteer groups by providing grants for essential equipment to help them support vulnerable Queenslanders.

This government was elected to get Queensland back on track, and this means every department has had to play a part in the state's fiscal repair. While we have had to make some tough decisions, delivering essential front-line support and services for people most in need remains front and centre of the department's activities.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will now examine the appropriation for the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. We welcome Ms Elizabeth Fraser to the proceedings. I call the member for Woodridge.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Thank you, Chair. I refer to the front page of the SDS which sets out the budget for the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. Minister, given the significant funding cut of almost \$3 million to the commission between estimated actual 2011-12 and estimated 2012-13, can you please outline what services will be cut in the commission and how those savings have been made?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I think it was responded to in a question on notice for this hearing. I can read it here or I can throw to the commissioner who will be able to explain to you how they will be able to operate within the new budget arrangements.

**Ms Fraser:** As the minister advised in her response to the committee's question on notice, I have agreed with the government that the commission's budget will be reduced by \$2.4 million each year over the period of the forward estimates. This represents approximately five per cent of the commission's budget. Providing our assumptions about future demands related to the blue card system and the number of children we need to visit through our community visitor function are correct, we should be able to absorb this reduction through savings made from cost efficiency initiatives we are

already pursuing. There have been no job losses as a direct result of the efficiency measures, but my commission has always managed carefully its component of temporary positions to ensure its staffing levels efficiently meet peak demand periods. At this stage, we are continuing to fulfil our legislative functions in accordance with the service delivery targets set out for 2012-13. The minister has indicated to me that, if we find we experience financial pressures beyond my control, I am to inform her so that the government can consider that situation.

As the minister also advised the committee in the question on notice, I am conscious of the work that is being done by the Queensland child protection inquiry. Its aim is to report recommendations to government by 30 April next year. The recommendations made by Mr Carmody and the government's response may affect the current scope of my commission's operations, so it is a bit early to assess what long-term effect the present budget reductions may have.

In summary, I would like to highlight that our priority in our statute is always for vulnerable groups within the child and youth populations. We will always prioritise our activities towards making sure those services are made available. In that reprioritisation, the areas that will be looked at will be our capacity to do broader research and analysis work which may need to be considered.

**Mrs SCOTT:** On Wednesday, 22 August 2012, the Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian gave evidence at the public hearing of the Health and Community Services Committee in relation to the oversight of the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian. At the hearing, Ms Fraser advised that the commission had contributed five full-time employees to assist the inquiry. This is recorded at page 2 of the transcript of the public hearing, and I table the transcript. Minister, can you please outline what level those positions are and what the estimated budget for those positions is?

**Ms DAVIS:** I am aware of those five staff. The commissioner actually asked for people who may be interested to participate in the inquiry. I have not seen the transcript of the committee hearing so I am not sure of what is there, but I think the commissioner has a list here of the roles the individuals had prior to them participating in assisting with the inquiry. Is that what you are seeking to learn?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes. Commissioner, you might like to give us that information.

**Ms DAVIS:** Can I throw to the commissioner?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes.

**Ms Fraser:** It is correct that there are five employees from the commission who are assisting the commission of inquiry. There was a submission in terms of expressions of interest called for with respect to that. Clearly, the commission of inquiry is front and centre in terms of our interest in what is the strategic agenda for the next period with regard to child protection. We felt that some of the work it is doing needed to be well informed by information and data we had. Five people have put up their hand. They range from two AO8 staff members—one from the policy research area and one from the investigations and review area.

There is one person also at an AO6 level who comes from the research arena. There is somebody else who comes from a AO3 level who had experience in managing witnesses for inquiries and hearings but was currently working in my blue card environment. There was another person who is an AO3 full-time who was an information officer and had significant experience in managing submissions and information that the commission might need. So there were five people coming from those different areas with those skills. I felt that it was a useful process to release them to assist with the commission's terms of reference.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** My question is for the minister. Could you outline the activities and the achievements of the Community Visitor Program please?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for that question. The Community Visitor Program is a visible and direct way that the commissioner for children and young people monitors and advocates for improvements within the child protection system. This program has been delivered to children and young people in foster care, in residential care and in detention since 2005 as part of the commission's legislative responsibilities to promote and protect the rights and interests of children and young people in Queensland. The program was essentially established so that children are visited regularly by an independent person who is able to raise concerns regarding the safety of those children within the context of the care system. I might invite the commissioner to discuss the recent activities and achievements of the program.

**Ms Fraser:** As the minister outlined, the commission community visitors are there to independently verify the circumstances of young people who are living in foster homes, in residential facilities or in detention centres. This enables us to use our own source data to report on the quality of care that is being provided for those young people. We can then act on any grievances or issues that those young people raise with us and make sure that those issues are addressed by the service provider. We use that program to provide us with that information both at an individual advocacy level and also to inform our systemic advocacy.

In the 2011-12 financial year we visited 7,911 children in those places on a frequent and regular basis, we facilitated their involvement in decisions about things that were important to them in their lives and advocated for the successful resolution of the concerns that those young people might have. We collate the top three issues that those young people raised with us through the generation of reports from the CVs—community visitors—after each and every visit. Last financial year they generated 44,356 reports on their visits to individual children and about 4,000 site reports on their visits to residential facilities. That gives us quite a large body of information to collate with respect to what the top issues might be. Those top three issues for the last financial year, which we did report publicly in our child guardian child protection report, related to contact. They were issues that were concerning young people with regard to their contact with families or child safety officers, their placement arrangements and their level of therapeutic care. They were the critical things that we dealt with in relation to the Community Visitor Program.

**CHAIR:** The time for examination of the commission has expired. We now move to examine the Child Safety portfolio.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, I refer to page 4 of the SDS, which outlines the work of your department in delivering a number of government commitments including assisting as required with the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry. Minister, are you providing any staff from your department proper to work on the inquiry in addition to the five from the commissioner's office?

**Ms DAVIS:** The department is assisting with staff as part of the inquiry.

**Mrs SCOTT:** How many staff and at what level?

**Ms DAVIS:** I am advised that the department has four staff seconded to the commission of inquiry. That is two at SO level, one PO5 and one PO4.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Does the work of your department also have to be reprioritised to accommodate this?

**Ms DAVIS:** My understanding is that the director-general has looked very carefully at how the staffing arrangements were to be determined to assist with the inquiry. I might ask the director-general to perhaps outline further.

**Ms Allison:** In relation to the four staff who are seconded to the commission of inquiry, no. Given the size of the department, the secondment of those officers has no substantive effect on the conduct of work by the department.

**Mrs SCOTT:** I refer to an article in the *Australian* newspaper dated 12 October 2012 entitled 'Decision to cut child-protector role inexplicable' and to an article in the *Cairns Post* dated 15 October 2012 entitled, 'Funding cut to crucial Aurukun indigenous services co-ordinator'. I seek leave to table copies of those.

**CHAIR:** Leave is not required. You are a member of the committee.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Thank you. Can the minister explain why Mr Bruce Marshall who is referred to in those articles, who has been a community based coordinator for Child Safety and government services in Aurukun, is to be sacked at the end of December and his position abolished?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I can advise the committee that the gentleman referred to will not be sacked. Service development and integration office positions have been funded under the Alcohol Management Reform Program. These temporary internal departmental positions have been located in the communities of Aurukun, Hope Vale, Kowanyama and Yarrabah. The role of a service development and integration officer is to provide support to funded direct client service delivery organisations to ensure that services are of high quality, consistent with departmental policy and address the needs of local communities. Their focus has been on the reduction of alcohol related harm. I really would like to hand to the director-general in order to further expand on what is happening with that role into the future.

**Ms Allison:** If I can clarify, the positions are not recurrent positions. So they were always time limited positions and were always planned to cease as part of the Alcohol Management Reform Program by 31 December this year.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** In September the results of a survey of children and young people in residential care were released. Could the minister outline the results of the survey and how the information is used within her department?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. It is really a question for the commissioner, but I am happy to answer in part for him. The survey of children in residential care, which was undertaken by the commission, together with its survey of children in foster care and youth detention provide important perspectives on the effectiveness of Queensland's child protection and youth justice systems. The results of the surveys contribute to informing policy and practice improvements and provide a mechanism for tracking changes in young people's responses over time. They show what is improving in the system and where perhaps greater focus is required. The commission's latest survey report on

the views of children living in residential care provides us with insight into this regard. I can say that it is very important that we understand the challenges that young people face in residential care or in out-of-home care. The commissioner's latest survey report will certainly assist us in this way.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** The death of any child is, of course, a tragedy. Farm and quad bike accidents take the lives of many children each year. Can the minister outline the work of the commission which has been undertaken to learn from these deaths and promote safe environments for children?

**CHAIR:** We have dealt with the issues around the commission. I will thank the member for your concern and I will rule that out of order.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am happy to quickly answer it.

**CHAIR:** I am happy to hear your comments.

**Ms DAVIS:** If the member has a particular interest in this I am happy to speak briefly about it. One of the less prominent but nevertheless important statutory functions performed by the commission is in relation to maintaining a register of deaths of children. Since 2004 the commission has been registering all deaths in Queensland as well as analysing reporting on the trends and patterns using its register. A key focus of the work is to identify and address risks for children and systematically reduce the number of preventable deaths. It is noteworthy that, in performing this function, the commission found that there are unique risks and types of injury for children living in rural Queensland and that there are opportunities for preventive actions to be taken to reduce the risk of serious injury and death. The deaths of children associated with quad bikes was one of a number of areas of concern identified by the commission. It is an area that, when we are considering the safety of children, this report helped us in determining what is in the best interests of the child in terms of safety.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** I refer to the minister's opening statement about a \$75 million black hole in the Child Safety budget left by the former Labor government. Can the minister inform the committee how this year's budget is delivering for vulnerable children and supporting families across Queensland despite that black hole?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. The government is absolutely determined to make Queensland the safest place in Australia in which to raise a child. We are delivering a suite of initiatives in our first budget to provide important support and protection to children at risk of harm and neglect. We have done this in the face of considerable financial pressures. As I noted in my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bills, there was an enormous black hole for unfunded transitional placements in our child protection system. As I said in my opening remarks, we have allocated \$59.83 million in the 2012-13 financial year to address this structural deficit that was left to us courtesy of Labor. In addition, we have reprioritised growth funding of \$19 million from child safety and social inclusion services to fully fund this very important area and an additional \$80 million has been allocated across the forward estimates which, together with internal prioritisations, will ensure this area is fully funded over the following three years.

Our government has increased funding for Child Safety by 5.6 per cent, from \$733.1 million in 2011-12 to \$774.1 million in 2012-13. I think this is a really great outcome. The 2012-13 budget also allocates \$2 million for the first year of our Fostering Families trial, a new Child Safety intervention service to help reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care. Child Safety Services will also receive \$1.5 million over four years to provide increased counselling services for victims of child abuse and sexual assault. This initiative will also provide children from regional areas access to a telephone support line, which will provide around-the-clock counselling and support. The commission of inquiry into child protection, which was established by our government, is also underway, as you know. It will hand down its recommendations early next year. From this, our government will chart a new road map for child protection into the future.

Although it has been very challenging to finalise the budget for Child Safety under such constrained circumstances, not to mention the fact that we were behind the eight ball to start with, our key challenge of implementation begins now. I firmly believe that there are new opportunities for our sector to be innovative, collaborative and more efficient. Furthermore, I am confident that our government's current inquiry into child safety will better inform us of the opportunities and reforms we must undertake to deliver more effective and more meaningful outcomes for our children and young people.

As we move forward our core focus will be to look outwards, refocusing our efforts to ensure that we have a well-functioning, relevant and contemporary child protection system that produces stronger families and a brighter, safer future for our children, young people and families coming into contact with the child protection system in Queensland.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, how have the machinery-of-government changes to the department's Child Safety Services produced savings without reducing services delivered to at-risk children and their families? Have these operational savings been redirected to providing capital works expenditure for transitional placement of children with highly complex needs in out-of-home placements?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. As I have mentioned, when we came into government I found out very quickly about a huge black hole in Child Safety that was never properly funded. As my director-general calls it, there was a 'Hail Mary' approach to money—that is, hopefully at the end of the year there were some savings to be had so that this black hole could be filled.

Whilst a budget provision of \$78 million has been created for transitional placements in 2012-13, the department is actively working to underspend this amount by implementing a range of saving strategies in this area so that it has the option to redirect a portion of these funds to prevention and early intervention programs.

There are some other internal grants that are able to be reprioritised so that there is no direct impact on non-government services. Thus savings have been found to enable the department to fund transitional placements. These savings come from Child Safety's normal level of annual grant savings of \$24½ million as well as internal grant savings from: Evolve grant one-off reduction, \$2 million; community mental health deferral, \$2 million; innovative disability housing grant, \$2 million; return escalation funding on deferred grants, \$1.5 million; and capital saving, \$2.7 million. I might just hand to the director-general to outline anything further that she might like to add.

**Ms Allison:** In relation to the second part of your question about capital, there is no capital for transitional placements generally. All of the funding for transitional placement has been service payments to non-government providers.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, are community based parenting programs a component of departmental strategies to prevent the need for child protection orders?

**Ms DAVIS:** So you are asking whether non-government funded agencies assist?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** Is that your question?

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** The primary aim of the Child Safety family support programs are to improve the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and their families in order to prevent entry or re-entry into the child protection system or to reunite children in the statutory system with their families, if of course it is safe to do so. Some programs work exclusively with statutory children and their families, some programs work exclusively with non-statutory children and young people and their families, and some services work with both.

In 2011-12 the department provided funding to support children, young people and their families through programs and services including Family Intervention Services, the Helping Out Families initiative, which you would be aware of, and Referral for Active Intervention. The government will continue this funding in 2012-13 and has made a further commitment of \$5.5 million over four years to provide additional support to families who are at risk of entering the statutory child protection system through the establishment of new early intervention and prevention and intensive family support strategies and services.

In addition, the department is trialling the First Response foster and kinship care service with UnitingCare in Far North Queensland. This service involves a family assessment of children who enter care for the very first time to facilitate a rapid return of the child to their family where it is possible.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, were you consulted by the Minister for Health when he cut funding to the successful Parents Under Pressure program or by the education minister when he cut funding to the PPP parenting program, which I would gauge are very important programs?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. The short answer is no, that discussion was not held. Our department provides funding to a number of services to assist families with early intervention strategies, and that is what we were focusing on. Those questions that you have would need to be directed to those ministers.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** Minister, the Budget Measures document at page 29 talks about the Fostering Families trial. I note that the government has acknowledged the need to support families, particularly those who, with some extra help, may actually avoid having their children enter the protection system. With reference to the trial, can you advise how this initiative will work?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank you for the question. I know how interested you are in the child safety space. I have visited you in Townsville. Your interest in families, keeping families together and certainly keeping children in a safe environment is absolutely to be commended.

From the outset, I have to say how extremely excited I am about our Fostering Families trial as it is the first family support program in Queensland designed specifically to target childhood neglect. Whilst there are other programs that you would have heard me speak about in my earlier responses, this one specifically targets the matter of neglect. The program aims to keep families out of statutory care in the short and long term and accelerate their exit from the system. That is what it is all about. We aim to do this by providing practical, intensive family support, which would typically be provided in-home and after-hours, which is centred on strengthening the parenting skills of the family.

Our child protection data for the year ended 30 June 2012 tells us that neglect is the primary presenting issue in around a third of notifications that come to the department and around 42 per cent of substantiations, so it is a sizeable area of concern. Clearly, we are seeing too many cases where neglect is the primary presenting concern and we needed to do something about that.

It is important to understand that some indicators of neglect might include malnutrition, poor hygiene, unattended physical or medical problems, or frequent absence from school. This government believes that, with some extra help provided to families, we can keep children safe at home and increase their chance of a better childhood. And that is what it is all about.

We have allocated \$4 million to trial this first-of-its-kind initiative. The Brisbane South catchment areas of Stones Corner, Mount Gravatt and Wynnum will receive \$894,619 per annum for the initiative, Toowoomba North and South will receive \$572,870 per annum, and \$532,511 per annum has been allocated to the Maryborough-Hervey Bay catchment area. These areas were identified as having some of the highest numbers of children placed in out-of-home care and are localities that are currently underserved in the area of intensive family support.

We expect to see around 300 families each year assisted through the Fostering Families initiative, each being provided with intensive practical and in-home supports. We want to see results such as improved safety conditions for the children who are referred to the trial, along with a reduction in the likelihood of ongoing harm and neglect. I am happy to report that a funding round closed on 10 September, and this will be finalised in the near future.

As I have mentioned, this is the first family support program in Queensland specifically targeted around issues of childhood neglect. It is well understood that the earlier support is provided to families that struggle in their parenting role the less likely the need for government intervention in placing their children in out-of-home care. So our Fostering Families initiative is all about keeping families together where it is safe to do so, and we are proud to be providing such a worthy initiative to the families in need of our help.

**Mr TROUT:** Minister, I take particular note of the Fostering Families trial, being the first of its kind in Queensland targeting the primary issue of neglect. What other innovative trials is the government supporting the protect children and support vulnerable families?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank you for the question. One initiative that I recently had the pleasure of getting to know more about is the First Response project, which I referred to earlier, which is a joint initiative between Child Safety in Far North Queensland, which I am sure is of interest to you, and our funding partner UnitingCare community foster care program. In essence, this program aims to get a better understanding of the child's needs upon their first entry into the child protection system by undertaking a more focused assessment process to maintain stability of the child's placement whilst at the same time building on relationships with the parents with the goal of improving their parenting skills.

A number of families were identified for the trial, which focuses on understanding a child or young person's needs, allowing them the space to grieve—this happens often when they are placed in out-of-home care in the initial stages—and understand what is happening to them, and then identifying a sustainable placement that can meet their needs.

First response foster care placements are viewed as assessment placements. First response support staff are specifically trained carers who utilise observation tools to identify the needs of the child or young person who has entered care for the first time. The first response foster carers are an integral part of the assessment process along with the support they are given so as to subsequently reduce the likelihood of placement breakdown.

First response has also developed and rolled out a carer training package to enhance existing skills and introduce a new set of skills to carers. My department will be providing \$190,000 per annum to this project, which contributes to the wages of two full-time workers—that is a team leader and a placement worker. As I mentioned, I was able to hear about this great initiative firsthand when I went on a recent trip to Cairns. I look forward to receiving the findings of the evaluation of the project next year when it is undertaken by UnitingCare Community.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, does the decline in the performance target for young people's rating of the helpfulness of community visitors have any correlation with the reduced funding for support services?

**Ms DAVIS:** This really is a question for the commissioner. The community visitors bring that material—

**Mrs SCOTT:** Do you want to put that one aside? Yes?

**CHAIR:** Are you suggesting that they—

**Ms DAVIS:** I am happy to take that on notice for you.

**Mrs SCOTT:** If you can put it on notice.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am not sure that the commissioner is still here.

**Mrs SCOTT:** She has gone. Minister, the rate of protective orders particularly for Indigenous children is expected to rise by 2.5 per cent with more children staying in care longer and more children requiring out-of-home care. Could you please detail what new capital works other than those already commenced under the previous government are included in this budget to meet this anticipated demand for out-of-home residential placements?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. You are absolutely right: there is no doubt that Indigenous children are well overrepresented in the child protection system. I am really very pleased that in the commission of inquiry there are particular terms of reference specifically targeting that particular issue. It is certainly of concern that the numbers are increasing. There are some challenges around providing placements for young people. No doubt, the preferred option to make it a culturally acceptable placement is to try to place these young people with kinship carers. There are issues in terms of finding numbers of kinship carers to take the number of children who are presenting within the child protection system. Unfortunately, what that means is that sometimes they have to be taken off community, if that is where they come from. But the child safety officers work very closely, particularly with the recognised entities, to try to ensure that the most appropriate placement is found if it is outside of kinship care.

With regard to the capital budget, there is \$6 million to continue construction activities and the establishment of facilities to support the Safe Haven program on Mornington Island, Coen, Cherbourg and Doomadgee. This program will provide culturally appropriate services to respond to the safety needs of children, young people and their families in these communities. There will be \$5.7 million for remote Indigenous service delivery, including \$1.9 million to continue establishing safe houses in the Torres Strait. I think that is what you were referring to. There is \$3.7 million to continue the establishment of employee housing in areas including Aurukun, Doomadgee and the Torres Strait and office accommodation to service remote Indigenous communities in locations such as Doomadgee, Cooktown and Kowanyama.

It is an area that is of particular interest to me, member for Woodridge. It is very concerning the number of Indigenous kids coming into care. I think we all agree that something has to be done to change how we deal with the complexities surrounding communities and putting children in care.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Absolutely. Minister, why do you think the increase in the rate of children subject to protective orders for Indigenous children rose from, I understand, 48 in 2011-12 to 51 in 2012-13? That is a 6.3 per cent increase. It is three times more than the increase in the rate for non-Indigenous children, which is from 5.2 per cent in 2011-12 and 5.3 per cent in 2012-13—a two per cent increase. Are there any ideas of what we can do and the reasons behind this?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I am really hopeful that the commission of inquiry will bring people together to really start looking at this particular issue. The department in the past, no doubt, has attempted to address this issue. It is quite difficult because of the complexities around particularly communities who are dealing with a range of issues, including increased levels of domestic and family violence and substance abuse compared to the rest of the community. So there are some other issues that communities are challenged with, which place their children at greater risk of harm and, therefore, greater risk of having an interaction with the child protection system.

You cited some figures—48 to 51. It also depends on whether it is individual children coming into care—how many children are in the family—that there would be flexibility there in terms of those statistics that you gave. If I can just share with you some details: the rate of children subject to protective orders per 1,000 children, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, was higher than expected in 2011-12. The actual rate recorded in 2011-12 was 8.3 per cent per 1,000 children. That is consistent with the estimated actual but slightly higher than the 2011-12 target, which had an estimate of around 7.6 per 1,000 children. The increase is also likely due to a number of factors, including the increase in recent years of young people being admitted to long-term protection orders than other children. There is a higher rate of long-term protection orders with Indigenous kids.

The target or estimates for 2012-13 reflect the expected continuing increase in the number of children being subject to a protection order. As I said, the child protection inquiry is currently reviewing it and it is due to report in April next year. I am looking forward to understanding the recommendations that Commissioner Carmody will put forward to us.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, I have just a short follow-up question. Rather than just accepting this as an inevitability, what measures are contained in the budget to reduce this gap in life chances for our Indigenous children?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for the question. I have outlined some of the initiatives that this government is pursuing, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support and the safe houses program. If I can just restate that there are terms of reference in the inquiry and the commissioner will be looking at that. When he hands down his report I am very keen to hear what people put forward as ideas on how we can address this very concerning imbalance in statistics between Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander young people and other Queenslanders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I now call the member for Ferny Grove.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** The service performance section of the SDS lists one of the key functions of child safety as working with young people transitioning from care. Will the minister outline the benefits of increasing the age of young people leaving state care from 18 to 21 and outline what current transitional arrangements are being offered?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for his question. It is a really good one, because we all know that support to young people regardless of their circumstances does not simply stop upon them turning 18 years of age. Continuing support is particularly important for young people who have been in care and who have faced some of life's toughest challenges during their adolescence. In Queensland, around 850 young people transitioned from care at 18 years of age over the past three years. As at 30 June 2012, there were 1,273 young people aged 15 years and over subject to a child protection order granting custody or guardianship of the chief executive, which is the director-general.

What our commitment means is that we do not want to see any young person leaving care without knowing that they have somewhere to turn and to receive some support and referral if they need it. We do not want them feeling, once they leave care, that nobody is there to support them. We do not want them falling through the gaps, because I have heard too many stories of how children in the past have exited care without proper planning and supports identified. These kids then struggle and we cannot have that continue.

So the process of transitioning from care must begin well before they leave care. That is why this government is steadfastly committed to ensuring that all children in care aged 15 years and over have a well-developed and meaningful transition from care plan that also identifies what personal support is available to them up to 21 years of age. While we know that not every young person who exits care will have the same after-care support requirements, some will require a higher level of support more frequently than others covering a range of issues. We just want to be there for them.

Currently, there are a range of options in place to provide support after a young person leaves care, but we are investigating continuing options to enhance the transition from the care experience, along with what post-care services can be provided to young people in Queensland, so that they are well supported through to 21 years of age. This work is currently being done within the department. We should also remember that the child safety inquiry may also inform the scope of this important aspect of a child's life.

Whilst I am on this topic, it would be very remiss of me not to mention that November is Transition to Independence Month. I look forward to the opportunities that this will present to engage with the sector in Queensland and in developing strategies that promote and highlight the needs of young people in care and young adults who have left care.

**CHAIR:** I thank the minister. I am mindful of the time. The time allocated for examination of the Child Safety portfolio has expired. We thank Margaret Allison for her attendance here tonight. The appropriation for the Disability Services portfolio will now be examined. This part of the proceedings will be interpreted in Auslan for the benefit of those present and those watching on the internet broadcast. You will notice that the interpreters are behind me. I call the member for Inala.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, I refer to question on notice No. 11 where you detail as at 23 September there have been 609 employee separations. Can you please detail for the committee the breakdown of those 609 employees in relation to Child Safety staff, Disability Services staff and Communities staff?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for the question. I am happy to read my response to you. As at 23 September 2012 there have been 609 employee separations since 26 March. There were 87 permanent employees who have accepted voluntary redundancies.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sorry, Minister, I do have that response. What I am asking for is a breakdown of your portfolio: Child Safety, Disability Services and Communities.

**Ms DAVIS:** I will just see if we have those available here.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Do you want to take it on notice?

**Ms DAVIS:** We would be able to get back to you during the session, I would think.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** There have been some 609 employees who have now left the department. Will you rule out any further staff reductions for the remaining term of the LNP government? Yes or no: will you rule out any further staff reductions for the remaining term of the LNP government?

**Ms DAVIS:** Thank you for the question. It is very difficult to determine how the staff numbers might fluctuate between now and the end of the term. There might be staff members who choose to leave to go to other employment. To rule out and tell you that nobody is going to leave the department—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am talking about further sackings.

**Ms DAVIS:** I can give you the final detail. Just one moment, please. Sorry to take the time there. What I can tell you is that all staff under the right sizing of the department have been informed and that the target will be reached by the end of June 2013. It is quite an unreasonable question. That is asking me to have a crystal ball.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Surely departmental employees would want some certainty about whether they have something more to fear from this government. There have already been some 14,000 sackings. In your department alone there have been 600 sackings. I think you would agree with me that there has been a lot of emotional distress that people have gone through.

**Ms DAVIS:** I reject that we have had 600 sackings. That is your language, not what has happened.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What happened to the people then?

**Ms DAVIS:** Some took voluntary redundancies, some individuals were on temporary contracts. Nobody was walked out the door.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No phone calls were made?

**Ms DAVIS:** I think that the inflammatory language that you are using is not reflective—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No phone calls were made to people?

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question, member for Inala. Minister?

**Ms DAVIS:** I think it is fair to say that at management level when they were speaking to staff about what opportunities were available in the future, how the new department was going to look, where they might like to be placed if there was a resizing of their department, of course there would be a phone call made. What I can tell you is that the work that the department has done in order to restructure so that we are right sized, so that we are more streamlined, I think has been achieved. I can tell you that there were no sackings, they were voluntary redundancies or they were temporary contracts that were not renewed.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What is the right size for your department?

**Ms DAVIS:** I think we are getting there. As I said, 6,045 is the number that we are looking at by the end of next year. I know that at senior level, departmental officer level, that is at regional executive director level, along with the Director-General, they have been working out what is the best mix and size for each of the regions. But if I might just hand to my Director-General to talk about how those decisions were made about the number of people in the regions.

**Ms Allison:** The department has realigned its operations to make optimal use of resources and reduce expenditure. It has occurred primarily in central office corporate policy and back office support staff and to a much lesser extent back office regional staff. Because of the machinery of government changes that affected the department immediately after the election this year, with functions of the previous Department of Communities going to five different other agencies across government, we needed to work on our organisational structure probably a bit earlier than some other departments so we were able to develop a new structure that was in accord with what the expenditure reduction targets would be. We did have a large number of temporary staff. This is a bit of a feature of our workforce anyway, particularly as we have a highly feminised workforce. For example, I understand at the moment working in Child Safety we have over 200 temporaries replacing people who are on various forms of leave, mostly maternity leave. We continue to backfill those.

We are focusing very much on streamlining work tasks and business systems and reducing red tape in order to provide efficiencies, including the development of administration clusters where teams provide support to a cluster of like service centres within a region. The process of achieving the staff reduction focuses on identifying positions that impact least on our capacity to deliver services and administer programs. The department directly appointed key permanent staff into ongoing roles or where there were surplus staff—that is, where there were more staff than positions available—assessments of suitability were conducted. Where it is not possible to place permanent staff into the structure, staff have the other opportunity to be placed directly into other positions, and I am really delighted we have been highly successful at doing that, or to accept a voluntary redundancy which provides benefits according to years of service.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Just a follow-up question: were there any counselling services or information services put in place by the department in relation to getting this right sized department?

**Ms DAVIS:** What I can advise is that every person was referred to the employee assistance program. I would need the Director-General to outline—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Why would they need to be referred to an employee assistance officer if they were not sacked?

**Ms DAVIS:** There might be people taking a voluntary redundancy or people coming to the end of their contract. Let us look at the realities of what happened. If the former government had not gone and kept people on temporary contracts year after year after year after year—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, this is your decision, Minister.

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question.

**Ms DAVIS:** In relation to these people who thought they had a permanent position, when these hard decisions were having to be made because of the financial mess that we were left in, we provided referrals for anybody who felt upset about what was happening around them. If I could just hand to the Director-General.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, why would they be upset if they are not sacked?

**CHAIR:** The minister has answered the question, member for Inala. I now call the member for Capalaba.

**Ms DAVIS:** Excuse me, Chair, I have some details for one of the questions that was asked earlier about splitting the positions: Child Safety 151; Communities, 190; and Disability Services 278. That is full-time equivalents.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** Minister, the SDS highlights a record spend for specialist disability services. My first question to you is will you outline how this government is supporting people living with a disability and their families through this investment?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I appreciated our conversation the other day because I know how interested you are in the disabilities area and that you have a number of disability services located in your electorate. Thank you for your interest in this space. The government is very committed to supporting and protecting the wellbeing of vulnerable Queenslanders and supporting excellence in the delivery of front-line human services. The total expenditure budget for Disability Services in 2012-13 is \$1.367 billion and reflects the commitment of this government in maintaining support for people with a disability and their families and carers.

State funding for specialist disability services has increased by three per cent from almost \$931 million in 2011-12 to almost \$959 million in 2012-13. The budget delivers funding on our election commitments which is \$1 million for the first year of the Parent Connect trial to provide assistance to families of children who are diagnosed early with a disability and a further \$1 million for each of the three years to follow that. There is \$5.5 million each year for four years for flexible respite for young people aged 16 to 25. In talking to the sector and families prior to coming into government in my role as shadow minister, this age bracket seemed to be needing some extra support because when these kids particularly come out of school they need support behind them in order to continue a valued life out in the community.

The budget delivers growth funding from state and Commonwealth of \$32.5 million to respond to people's need for assistance in critical stages of life, such as young people with a disability leaving care or school and supported accommodation. The budget also delivers indexation for non-government services in recognition of the increased cost of service delivery. That is 3.54 per cent on disability grants and 3.75 per cent on community care grants. The lower rate for disability services is as a result of the lower rate of 2.75 contributed by the Commonwealth to this joint service responsibility.

In addition, Disability Services will deliver a number of capital works projects in 2012-13 totalling \$19.15 million, and that includes \$10.7 million to continue the Positive Futures initiative and \$7.9 million for supported accommodation. In 2012-13 Disability Services will provide \$29.8 million in capital grants, including \$14.1 million for the construction and modification of centre based care facilities and to support the delivery of other home and community care services. There is \$8.1 million for a range of accommodation options under the Positive Futures initiative and \$7.56 million for strengthening non-government sector organisations.

On top of this we have invested the following: \$127 million for low intensity community care services for Queenslanders under 65 years of age and Indigenous clients under 50 years of age; \$4 million for additional post school services; an additional \$11 million for an estimated 210 young people who have exited the care of the state in their transition to stable living arrangements as young adults into the community; and \$16.6 million for a range of accommodation support options for people based on their individual level of need. We have also quarantined the disability services sector from any efficiency dividend until 2014-15.

Another area of focus for this government is the area of greater choice and control. In September I was very pleased to be with the Premier when he launched the Your Life Your Choice self directed funding framework. This framework is a significant step towards strengthening and revitalising front-line

disability services. This initiative and the budget measures I have outlined demonstrate our very clear commitment to delivering real and direct support for people with a disability, their families and their carers.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Just following up on your last comments there and your response to government question on notice No. 5 regarding Your Life Your Choice, I must say this initiative has been very well received in my electorate of Bulimba. Can you update the committee on how this positive initiative will give greater choice and control to people living with a disability and how your department intends to implement it?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question and I, too, have received some really positive feedback about this particular initiative. I think for a really long time now, people have been interested in being able to have the opportunity to purchase the specialist disability services that they want, rather than being told what they have to have. The move towards greater control and choice for people with a disability is an absolute priority for this government.

As I said, I was really very pleased to be with the Premier when we launched this initiative in September. The framework for Your Life Your Choice is a really big step towards strengthening front-line disability services. It will enable people with a disability and their families to have that greater choice and control over their disability supports and services. It is this independence that people have been calling for, as I said. When we launched the initiative, it was really well received and it is received even better now. It is beyond our expectation. We are really looking forward to being able to work with families and people with a disability to get the results that they want. Recently I attended an NDS budget breakfast which involved a roomful of people from the sector and you could tell that they were very excited about being able to offer clients the services that they wanted.

Self directed support will be delivered in two ways: payments through a host provider and direct payments to people from the department. Self directed support with payments through a host provider will be rolled out in a phased approach and will be made available in November this year to families who formerly received funding through the Family Support Program. On 11 September, I introduced the Disability Services (Your Life Your Choice) Amendment Bill. This bill proposes to amend the Disability Services Act 2006 to enable people with a disability to receive funding directly. I understand that the committee has been considering that amendment bill.

It is not only our government that has supported the introduction of self directed funding. The Productivity Commissioner recommended that an individual choice and control model should be adopted for a National Disability Insurance Scheme, which included people with disabilities self directing their support. Self directed support has been internationally recognised as an effective and efficient approach to deliver human services that are truly controlled by the person receiving the services. The recent evaluation of self directed funding approaches undertaken by KPMG as part of the development of the draft policy framework for choice and control in the National Disability Insurance Scheme, which was released at the end of July this year, found that self directed funding models have resulted in increased access to paid care, reduced poor health outcomes, equal or greater consumer satisfaction compared to other funding arrangements, and more cost effective and financially sustainable services than traditional funding approaches.

It is important to note that a person can take on as much or as little of the planning, budgeting, coordinating and reporting of their disability supports, depending on what they are comfortable with. There will be some individuals who are happy with the current arrangements of how their package is provided and administered. They will be offered that opportunity. However, if people would like to take on looking after their own disability funding packages, seeking their own supports and acquitting back to the department, that opportunity would be there for them. The host providers provide an interim or in-the-middle approach. Some people may like to look after a portion of their funding package and have somebody else assist them. That is what host providers can do for a nominal fee.

The range of services that people with disabilities can purchase will remain in line with the specialist disability system. This aligns itself with the recommendations proposed by the Productivity Commission for a National Disability Insurance Scheme. By way of the policies behind the initiative, there are a number of matters that require careful consideration and consultation with the sector, particularly people with a disability, to support the implementation of Your Life Your Choice self directed funding.

I understand that the department is arranging to have a co-production meeting in early November, which will bring people together to look further at how we need to progress. We will also be consulting with Queensland Disability Advisory Council members and the partnership forum which is comprised of stakeholders in this sector. In the development of any policy position, we need to be aware of the alignment with the NDIS. We are also looking at other jurisdictions where self directed funding is occurring. Our policies will be clear and will be supported by guidelines and a user handbook that is easy to understand. This new way of providing disability support is really long overdue in Queensland. I am very pleased to say that we are delivering in this area.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you, Minister, for your previous comments on that initiative that was trialled under my term as minister for disabilities.

**Ms DAVIS:** I disagree with that. Yours was a short—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I refer to—

**Ms DAVIS:** No. This is not the same initiative and if you want to claim this initiative as yours, that is inappropriate.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It sounds very similar, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** It is not very similar. I guess I would ask: when you were the disability minister, why didn't you change the DSA so that people could have consumer choice and control of their funding?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Because it was a trial, Minister.

**CHAIR:** Minister and member for Inala. Member for Inala, you have the call.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** SDS page 10: can you please outline to the committee the progress of the autism centre in Mackay?

**Ms DAVIS:** I know that the member is aware that there were some issues with the land and EQ.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes. I am wondering how it is progressing.

**Ms DAVIS:** My understanding is that there are still a few issues around that. The department is working very hard to resolve those very quickly, so that those important services will be delivered to those people who need it in Mackay.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, can you take a personal interest and get some time frames back to us?

**Ms DAVIS:** I am happy to do that for you.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Is that a question on notice?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, on the time frames.

**CHAIR:** Is leave granted? Leave is granted.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, I refer to page 10 of the SDS which references the work of the department in providing services to enable people with a disability to participate in the community. In this respect, did the minister have any discussions with the Minister for Transport before he decided to put a cap on the taxi subsidy scheme?

**Ms DAVIS:** We are very keen to see that people with a disability can participate in community. What I can say about the taxi subsidy scheme is that it is administered, as you know as both a former disability minister and a former transport minister—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Usually both ministers talk in relation to those issues and I know that because, as a former minister—

**CHAIR:** The minister is answering the question, member for Inala.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are just having a general light discussion across the table, Chair.

**Ms DAVIS:** I can tell you that Minister Emerson has announced that he is actively consulting and reviewing the issue, including better coordination of existing schemes. I look forward to the results of that. I know there have been some people in the disability sector concerned about the impacts of it, so I very much look forward to the outcomes of the review.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Have you received any representations from people with a disability about the cap that has been placed as part of your government's budget?

**Ms DAVIS:** Yes, I have. That is why the Minister for Transport is now undertaking a review.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Would you be prepared to take a question on notice, to give us the number of emails and letters you have received from people about the issue?

**Ms DAVIS:** To the ministerial office?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am happy to do that.

**CHAIR:** Is that relevant to the budget?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I think it is entirely relevant to the budget. This is the Minister for Disability Services and it is having a huge impact on people with a disability.

**CHAIR:** How is the number of emails received from constituents on a given issue relevant to the budget?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Because this is an initiative of the government. I am sorry, Chair: I am allowed to ask questions in relation to the government. This government has made a decision that is having a huge impact on people with a disability. It is highly relevant.

**CHAIR:** How is the number of emails relevant in your estimation?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is highly relevant. It is page 10 of the SDS. The minister has said she is happy to provide those details, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The issue is highly relevant, but—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The minister has said she is happy to provide those details.

**CHAIR:** I still not entirely sure of the relevance, but the minister has conceded.

**Ms DAVIS:** There is not any relevance, but I am happy to take the question. It needs to be restated that this is not our funding in Disability Services. It is funding under the Department of Transport. As I understand it, we put NDS up to be part of that review. We have somebody from the sector as part of that review.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, I understand that unemployment is around 6.3 per cent at the moment and in a party room meeting it was predicted that it would go up to eight per cent. What are you doing to encourage more people with a disability to participate in the community and to gain access to a job?

**CHAIR:** The minister will disregard any reference to media hype about percentages, but the question is valid in relation to unemployment.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Are there any programs that you know of, any places that you have visited?

**Ms DAVIS:** When I was the shadow minister for disability services, it was terrific to go to the Cairns conference and have the opportunity to sit in on one of the sessions with some service providers, talking about how they worked actively with people with a disability to secure them employment. Yes, I have and I had a chat with them after. Also, I chatted to families and people with a disability who would like to re-enter the workforce. I understand that people with a disability do take an interest in being able to participate fully in community by accessing employment. It is a challenge to secure employment for some people with a disability. That was the feedback that I had from the employment agencies, but there is no doubt that they are full of enthusiasm to try to work actively to secure employment for people with a disability who wish to work. Not everybody wants to connect with community through employment. But for those who do, there are certainly some really great organisations out there trying to assist.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, do you see it as a priority for you to look at ways in which we can encourage more people with a disability into the workforce? Your government has set this ambitious goal of four per cent unemployment. We are at 6.3 per cent and rumours are that it will head up to over eight per cent. Shouldn't this be a priority of yours, to be looking at ways to encourage more people into the workforce?

**CHAIR:** Again, there is no reference to any percentage, but the unemployment issue is valid, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** I think it is really important.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is a bit like the one hundred billion, isn't it, Chair?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank you for your question. I think it is really important that we always have—

**CHAIR:** It is like legal documentation and information that other ministers have been asking for. It is the hidden information.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sorry, defamation—what do you mean?

**CHAIR:** No, information.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You said defamation.

**CHAIR:** No, information that other ministers are asking for from the Leader of the Opposition.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** We are talking about disabilities. I think you would rule yourself out of order.

**CHAIR:** The minister can answer.

**Ms DAVIS:** I think it is a really important issue that we always keep on our radar.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is a serious issue.

**Ms DAVIS:** It is a very serious issue and we should always keep on our radar to work with people with a disability and their families in order to provide opportunities for them to seek employment. Setting targets is not something that I am going to offer here today, but where we can we will keep that on the policy radar. Mind you, employment is a Commonwealth responsibility in terms of placements. But I think we should always encourage and support those people if they wish to achieve employment.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Before you mentioned some funding cuts. I think you mentioned—and correct me if I am wrong—a \$2 million cut to innovative support housing. Can you detail where that innovative support housing was due to be constructed? In an answer you gave earlier you said there were cuts of \$2 million to community mental health and \$2 million to innovative—

**Ms DAVIS:** I am sorry, I missed what you just said.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Earlier you commented that there was a \$2 million cut to innovative support housing. Can you detail where that housing was supposed to be built?

**Ms DAVIS:** I am not sure that there was actually a location determined. I am trying to find a location, if that is what you are after?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You can come back to me.

**Ms DAVIS:** Is that okay?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Sure.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am not actually sure that it had progressed to a location. I do not think there had been other than a conversation and agreement in principle with Foresters. This had been discussed by the previous government and we chose not to progress it. I am not sure that there was a location discussed at that stage of the conversation between the previous government and Foresters.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** In the budget measures at page 29 it talks about spending of \$6½ million supporting Queensland's with disabilities including extra respite. Can you advise how the government's commitment for flexible respite is going to be rolled out and how possible clients are going to be identified?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. It really is a fantastic initiative we are delivering. Throughout Queensland respite has been identified as a priority for families of people with a disability. This was also supported by the Productivity Commission's report on disability care and support. It highlighted respite options as a growing area of unmet need.

The government made a commitment to invest \$22 million over four years for extra respite hours for people with high-needs disabilities aged between 16 and 25. Young people with a disability who fall within this age range will need to participate in the standard access process to be considered for support through the initiative. But those eligible for this terrific initiative will have been assessed by the department and hold a position on the register of need.

The government is making \$5.5 million available each year commencing in the 2012-13 financial year. Flexible respite is expected to commence at the end of December this year. Those who receive an allocation of support under flexible respite will be able to select the most appropriate approved service provider to meet their support needs and requested service delivery model. Flexible respite will provide up to 3,600 hours of flexible respite for around 240 clients in 2012-13. Actual hours of service provision will be determined during the support linking process and will be quite dependent on the service delivery chosen by the client. Over four years flexible respite will provide up to 15,000 hours for around 1,000 Queenslanders.

Flexible respite will promote opportunities for people to access their community through local sporting and hobby clubs and local venues like cafes or pools, shops or neighbour centres and theatres if they like the arts. Importantly, it may provide lifestyle development in areas such as learning to catch public transport, cooking, money and household management and it will assist to strengthen links to the community.

Flexible respite will also operate state-wide and allocations will be made based on priority. Under this initiative individuals in rural and remote areas will have the same access to support as those living in urban areas. So the funding is able to be used flexibly—that is what it is about—to enable people to make arrangements that suit their needs. This can assist people, particularly in rural and remote areas, to access the supports they need.

**Mr SHUTTLEWORTH:** Following on from that, with reference to the same budget measure, can the minister also outline how the Parent Connect program will help families?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. This gap in services was raised with me in the early months when I became the shadow minister for disabilities. People felt that there could be more funding support by government to assist families that have a newborn with a disability or a young child who is diagnosed with a disability. It can be a really emotional and confronting time for families. On top of that, families can encounter considerable difficulty trying to navigate the maze of support services available during this time.

That is why we are delivering the Parent Connect initiative. Parent Connect is a four-year state-wide priority to assist Queensland parents with what I think is a much needed referral service. The initiative forms part of our commitment to providing early intervention, prevention and transition support to parents of children with a disability or developmental delay from birth through to six years of age.

Parent Connect will offer the choice of three responses to parents to access the support they need. By providing a tiered approach to support, it is expected that Parent Connect facilitators will proactively manage emerging issues, address the need as it happens and plan for positive future outcomes for the child with a disability, their parents and their family.

Parent Connect addresses the likelihood that a child's disability or developmental delay may not be diagnosed during the first 12 months of life and provide support for children to access support until six years of age. Parent Connect can link in with the Mums and Bubs program. As members would know Mums and Bubs is a maternal and child health service staffed by nurses. They visit the homes of newborns and run free community health clinics through Queensland Health. Home visits will occur at two and four weeks of age and free consultations at community centres at two, four, eight and 12 months. That is a bit of a plug for Minister Springborg's really worthy initiative.

Parent Connect facilitators will take cross-referrals from the Mums and Bubs program as well as direct referrals from other service providers, disability services intake processes or individual families. Parents will be able to contact the Parent Connect facilitator in their area directly or can access support through referral either through Mums and Bubs, a community organisation or a service provider. A proactive approach will also be taken to link this with hospitals ensuring families are connected to the service as soon as possible. It is an innovative early intervention initiative that I think will really assist parents when they are most in need.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** In your answer to question on notice No. 11 you said that there were no plans to cut critical front-line positions such as child safety officers and residential care officers. Could you explain to the committee how many residential care officers there are currently employed by the department?

**Ms DAVIS:** I will just have to get that number for you. While we are waiting for that I can advise the committee of the number of emails and letters to my office regarding the taxi subsidy scheme. I have responded to 22 letters or emails relating to the taxi subsidy schemes—so 22 to my ministerial office.

Presently there are 1,804 direct service delivery staff in AS&RS with over 900 permanent residential care officers. Does that answer your question?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Have you gone out and met any residential care officers?

**Ms DAVIS:** I have recently met with some. That was at a respite facility that I recently went to. They were very proud to show me around. I had the great opportunity to meet some of the clients. The clients had just come back from school and were settling in for afternoon tea. This particular service offers three-day respite cycles for the families of these children. It was great to be there. They were very happy with the work that they do.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** What about some of the AS&RS houses. Have you been to visit some of the houses where the residential care officers work?

**Ms DAVIS:** I have not been to an AS&RS residential location. I have been out to the Wacol precinct. It is certainly my intention to go in the next month or so. It has just been a busy and difficult time to get out. I have been to some of the home for life homes, that you would know about, through Multicap to understand how the interactions work for people with a disability who come together in that community accommodation environment and how the staff work?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Has the department briefed you about how some of the residential care officers look after some of the most high-needs people with a disability, those with complex behaviours? Have they briefed about those circumstances?

**Ms DAVIS:** Absolutely. I am acutely aware that some of the cohort have dual diagnoses. Some have very complex needs. I think though it is fair to say that that is not the majority of the client base, although there are certainly a number of them. They require particular assistance when they have a dual diagnosis. I am aware that there are some high needs clients.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Has the department briefed you that sometimes these people with complex behaviours are cared for by the residential care officers because of their expertise in this particular area and also because some of the non-government sector do not have the capacity nor the skills or the workforce to look after these people with high needs? Have you had any briefings in relation to that at all?

**Ms DAVIS:** We have not spoken specifically about it. What I am aware of though is that, across the sector, whether it is government providing the services or our non-government partners providing services, there are different levels of support that clients need. Even in the non-government sector, as you would know, they do have some high-needs clients. I was out at Forest Lake in the last three months or so and visited a home with three gentleman in it, two with very challenging behaviours. That was a non-government organisation working very well with these clients to achieve really good outcomes. So I think it is fair to say that both the government delivered services and the NGO sector have a cross-section of clients at varying levels of behaviours or needs that they deal with.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I have one more follow-up question, Chair, if you do not mind.

**CHAIR:** A final follow-up.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** So you acknowledge that the residential care officers do good work in caring for people with high-challenging behaviours and you also acknowledge that some of the NGOs do have the capacity to look after people with high needs. Minister, I am very concerned that the Premier has made comments in the media about outsourcing Accommodation Support and Respite Services. Will you undertake to make sure that you do go out and visit some of these accommodation services to keep yourself abreast of these issues?

**Ms DAVIS:** I think I have just indicated in my last answer that—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Yes, you have.

**Ms DAVIS:**—that my intention is to go out and visit.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Because the residential care officers do excellent work in the department and I would hate to see their role diminished.

**Ms DAVIS:** I do not think the Premier was indicating that residential care officers are not committed to their work. I think the Premier was indicating the differential in cost between government providing a service and the NGOs providing a service. I would reject that he was saying that the staff were not committed to providing a service to the clients.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Townsville.

**Mr HATHAWAY:** Minister, I refer to your response to government question on notice No. 4 in regard to the elderly parent carer innovation trial. I have a number of my constituents in Townsville who are elderly parents who are caring for one of their children with a disability. Can the minister outline the government's commitment to an elderly parent carer innovation trial please?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question and you are absolutely right. Many older parent carers are very anxious and stressed about the future. Some are so concerned about it that they just do not want to deal with it and set it aside. I know that they know it is not going to go away, but it is quite an enormous hurdle for them to undertake to actually address what is going to happen to their adult son or daughter either when they are no longer able to care for them in the home or when they pass away. It is an area that we know will increase in numbers in years to come. That is why we are looking at innovative ways in which we can try to address some of those issues that are of concern to elderly parent carers.

The trial is focused on addressing the varying circumstances of older parent carers and their adult children with a disability. The innovation trial will be administered by Queensland Treasury, so it is not funded within our budget. But, as you can imagine, there is a great deal of interest from our clients and their families and their carers in this space.

It will be administered by the Queensland Treasury Corporation, along with a small advisory board of people nominated by the Treasurer, the Minister for Housing and Public Works and my own department. So a ministerial round table of stakeholders including older parent carers and representatives of disability, housing, aged care, property development and financial organisations will come together. We are looking at trying to hold this round table next month.

The round table will provide advice on how to get the best results from this investment and how to make the scheme easy to administer and access. It will also determine the trial's final scope and eligibility and to develop guidelines for projects which will commence operations in the first half of 2013. But it is envisaged that the trial will operate by providing one-off capital grants of up to \$1 million and small grants of up to \$50,000.

I think it is a really exciting initiative and one that has been welcomed by the sector. The government is absolutely committed to improving the lives of people with a disability and their families. The elderly parent carer innovation trial is just one way that we are delivering on this commitment in the 2012-13 budget.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** My question is to the minister. Minister, I have met with a number of people with a disability in my electorate who rely on different aids and equipment not only for day-to-day living but also to participate in the community. Can the minister explain to the committee what her department is doing to provide this support for these people?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. Aids and equipment such as communication devices and mobility aids are essential in achieving independence and improving the quality of life for many people with a disability. They also though provide practical assistance to families, carers and service providers to strengthen their capacity to continue providing vital support and services.

I am also pleased to inform the committee that in April this year the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme commenced. This scheme provides subsidy funding for a range of options including a clinical assessment, driving lessons for our clients to learn how to drive a modified vehicle, modifications to a vehicle or the purchase of an already modified vehicle. The Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme budget for 2012-13 is \$1.35 million. So that is a good investment in that area.

In the first five months of operation—that is, April to mid-September—the Vehicle Options Subsidy Scheme experienced significant demand, with around 60 subsidies provided to clients to date. So that is a really good result. Total expenditure for the scheme from April to mid-September was around \$226,000, which included funding to an organisation called LifeTec Queensland, which I was recently pleased to visit, to provide state-wide education for the sector and clinical support.

The proposed Community Aids, Equipment and Assistive Technology Scheme will improve the department's provision of aids and equipment. Historically, aids and equipment were provided through multiple programs with varied access and eligibility. However, the new scheme will complement Queensland Health's Medical Aids Subsidy Scheme. The intent of Queensland Health's scheme is to assist people to live at home and to avoid premature or inappropriate residential care or hospitalisation. But the department's new scheme, which brings together the multiple access points that existed previously, will assist people with a disability to achieve greater social inclusion by subsidising aids and equipment. So it is about getting them out and about where we can.

The department will collaborate with Queensland Health, which will assist with the clinical determination of the applicants' needs. This will streamline processes and reduce administrative costs to the department. The Community Aids, Equipment and Assistive Technology Scheme will meet the strong demand for aids and equipment that has been identified through the disability services assessment process. I would note though that in 2013, with the separation of the Home and Community Care program into community care services under the national health reforms, just under \$79,000 will continue to be allocated for ongoing Home and Community Care projects related to aids and equipment for people with a disability under 65 years and for Indigenous people with a disability under 50 years.

So the funding will be allocated for a range of aids and equipment and associated activities. That includes \$20,000 to replace allied health equipment, \$10,500 to purchase podiatry equipment and around \$13,500 for the purchase of educational resources. We are very committed to supporting people with a disability with the provision of aids and equipment, and we are looking at ways in which we can assist people in that way.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Inala.

**Ms DAVIS:** Sorry, I need to correct, or clarify, a figure that I gave earlier with the AS&RS staff. There are 1,259 full-time equivalent residential care officers. The figure I quoted was 1,804.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** That is fine, Minister. Minister, has there been any new money in your budget allocated for Your Life Your Choice program?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. As I mentioned earlier, in the first instance—and the letters have just gone out to around 1,300 families who were on the former Family Support Program, which is very exciting as a first step—for those families who choose to participate, we have some internal savings in the department to assist individuals that choose to uptake, particularly if they require a host provider, as you know—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Is it new money allocated or is it from existing funds?

**Ms DAVIS:** No. As I just said, it is money from existing resources. It is just there as a top-up. I think we have around \$1 million set aside for people who may require it. As you would know, with the FSP people had reasonable flexibility in what they purchased. They had not been originally assessed under the Growing Stronger assessment tool. That is happening now. For those who wish to participate, there will be some opportunity there if they require a host provider. But the funding will not change. The base funding will not change. It will just be that extra if they require a host provider.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, who made the decision not to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme? Was it you or was it the Premier?

**Ms DAVIS:** The government's—

**CHAIR:** Is this getting into cabinet confidentiality areas?

**Ms DAVIS:** It was a cabinet decision.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Inala.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, what do you say to thousands of Queenslanders out there when your government continues to refuse to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme when New South Wales has signed up and Victoria has signed up? Why won't you stand up for people with a disability in this state and do what they want—and that is a minister who will stand up for them and sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I think our position has been quite clear that this government absolutely supports a National Disability Insurance Scheme in line with the recommendations of the Productivity Commissioner. I think it is really important to highlight to the committee that the former government did not commit in any way other than to support the recommendations of the Productivity Commissioner. I think it also needs to be said that what I think the member is referring to is the current trial of the National Disability Insurance Scheme; it is not signing up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is likely to be rolled out in 2017-18.

I think it is really important also for the committee to understand that we came into government with a massive financial mess—a massive financial mess. As the Premier said, it is regrettable that we are unable to participate in the trial but we will be doing what we can in order to prepare ourselves for the eventuality of the scheme. That is why we have announced the Your Life Your Choice initiative so that we can change the Disability Services Act so people can be funded directly so they can have consumer choice and control about the way they purchase disability services with their disability services money.

I think it is also really important to note that in this trial there are three elements being trialled; it is not the full NDIS. The first is the assessment tool. As a former minister, you would know through the negotiations or the conversations that we were having at the table with our jurisdictional partners that Queensland was working on an at the gateway building block, which included the assessment tool. The feedback I am getting through our officers is that the NDIS assessment tool will be very similar to the one that we have here in Queensland.

The second level that is being trialled is that of local area coordinators. Again, the member would know from her time as the disability services minister that we already have local area coordinators. So we have the next level signed off on. Thirdly, as I said, with the Your Life Your Choice trial, in changing the Disability Services Act we will be able to have opportunity to fund directly people with a disability or their families. The other thing that I think is very important is that we are very committed to an NDIS. In fact, we have sent a staff member to Canberra to be part of the NDIS team in putting things together. So we are at the table. We will be watching the trials very carefully—

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** But no money, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** I did not see any money in the forward estimates from your government for any NDIS trial.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the examination of the Disability Services appropriation has expired. I thank the minister for making the request of the committee to provide Auslan interpreters. I thank Michael Webb and Leanne Beer for providing that service here tonight. Thank you very much, Minister.

The committee will now examine the appropriation in the minister's portfolio for social inclusion, which includes community support, family and individual support, service quality and reform. I call the member for Bulimba.

**Mr DILLAWAY:** Minister, I refer to the SDS portfolio overview on page 3 and the LNP government's commitment to supporting our community and volunteer groups by providing \$4 million in grants through the Caring for our Community initiative. Can the minister outline how the grants scheme will benefit local communities such as those in my electorate of Bulimba?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I acknowledge that the member has a number of organisations in his electorate which may benefit from this small grants scheme, because it is designed to help community groups of all sizes. The Caring for our Community grants scheme is a \$4 million initiative over three years from 2012-13 that we are really pleased to deliver. It aims to support community and volunteer groups by providing grants for essential equipment or projects required to help them with their community work. It is anticipated that as many as 600 grants may be made across that three-year period, so that is quite wonderful.

Separate grants of up to \$5,000 and a small number of grants up to \$15,000 to meet a community group's needs will be made available through this scheme. For example, grants of up to \$5,000 will be made available for the purchase of small equipment items and material such as computers or upgraded software or whitegoods. Groups will be able to apply for more than one item under this grant. Some organisations may even receive grants between \$5,000 and \$15,000 for more substantial projects such as ensuring food preparation areas can become compliant with health regulations. This initiative will be open to all community not-for-profit groups including parents and citizen associations.

It is all about recognising the valuable contribution that community and volunteer groups make across Queensland and helping them enhance the services they provide. I am really confident that this kind of assistance will be welcomed by the many community groups across Queensland including those in your electorate which often just need a little bit of help to purchase these small but important items. I am pleased to say that applications for these small grants will open very soon.

**Mr TROUT:** My question is to the minister. In reference to the SDS portfolio overview on page 3, and with the ongoing increase in incidents in domestic and family violence and the prevalence of sexual assault in communities across Queensland, will the minister outline the government's strategy to reducing this problem?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for this question and for highlighting this very important and very devastating issue of domestic and family violence here in Queensland. As a community, we absolutely have a responsibility to do what we can to protect people at risk of domestic and family violence. It is a

responsibility that this government takes very seriously, which is why we have always supported the changes to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 that commenced in September this year.

My department funds a broad range of services to assist people affected by domestic and family violence, and these types of services provide access to specialist counselling for victims and children as well as male perpetrators. Services also include court support and a state-wide telephone advice and referral service as well as crisis accommodation for women and children escaping violence. In addition to providing direct and practical support to help people deal with the personal impacts of domestic and family violence, components of the service system seek to prevent violence through raising awareness and building community intolerance of domestic and family violence, because it should never be tolerated.

In Queensland we continue to fund our very own Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, which is located regionally in Mackay. Amongst other things, this centre contributes advice to government to help set our policy direction. We are funding some really great initiatives across the state. One such program is the safety upgrades program to keep women and their children who have experienced domestic and family violence in their own homes when it is safe to do so by enhancing home security.

In Rockhampton we trialled the Breaking the Cycle of Domestic and Family Violence project that was intended to demonstrate the benefits of a multidisciplinary team for a time limited period through to 30 June 2013. The trial included a case coordinated model and dedicated work by the QPS and the Magistrates Court to support victims of domestic and family violence. Aspects of the trial have ceased in the meantime, and several participating departments have needed to recall their staff to core duties. However, I am presently considering advice on the merits of continuing the funding provided by my department and seven participating non-government organisations to the end of the trial period—that is, the end of June 2013.

In January 2012, 20 non-government sexual assault support services transferred to my department from Queensland Health. In 2011-12 a total of \$5.8 million was allocated to those 20 services and in 2012-13 the total funding to these services will be \$5.925 million. The services provide support to people who have experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse in the past and need assistance in working through these issues. It is important to note that these services are not clinical or forensic, and neither are they support services for people who have just been sexually assaulted as these services are still provided by Queensland Health.

**CHAIR:** Was there a follow-up question, member for Barron River?

**Mr TROUT:** Yes. What other initiatives is the government supporting to assist in addressing domestic violence?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the supplementary question. I am aware of some effective alternative service models that the department could look at in the future. One example is that, together with Queensland police, Corrections and the Caboolture Regional Domestic Violence Service, my department has been demonstrating an approach to protect at-risk families on the north coast called PRADO, which is Partnership Response at Domestic Violence Occurrences. What is unique about this particular approach is that the intervention officer, who is employed by the Caboolture service through funding from my department, has been physically located at the Caboolture Police Station and jointly supervised by the QPS and the Caboolture service. The initiative has demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative case management practice between the key government and non-government stakeholders, reflecting an integrated service approach with the key outcome of reduction of severity of violence or of further reported domestic and family violence.

All families involved in a police domestic violence call-out have been visited within 48 hours of the domestic violence incident and supported to develop and implement a safety plan and link with ongoing support services. While funding for this initiative is not recurrent, the findings from its evaluation will inform our future thinking, particularly about evidence based alternatives.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Minister, I refer to Budget Paper No. 4, 'Grants Funding Efficiencies', where it states—

The Government will achieve savings of some \$259.7 million over four years from efficiencies gained in the delivery of services in the non-government sector.

Minister, I now draw your attention to non-government question on notice No. 16. Will you provide to the estimates committee a full, comprehensive breakdown of what organisations will be attributed the \$259.7 million of funding? Essentially what I am trying to say is that the answer to the question on notice is not very detailed. This is a large sum of money. This is probably the largest sum of money that is going from any one department—\$259 million over four years. Minister, I am happy for you to take it on notice but I think this committee and the people of Queensland need a full, comprehensive list of the full breakdown of the \$259 million. I am happy for you to take it on notice.

**Ms DAVIS:** I think we have answered the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** No, Minister; I am sorry, \$259 million.

**Ms DAVIS:** Well, I do believe we have.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** You talk about peak bodies and networks experiencing a 17 per cent reduction. You have not listed the peak bodies or the networks. The funding cuts tabled with your attachment nowhere near add up to the \$259.7 million. This committee has a fundamental right to know—this is the budget estimates process—how that \$259.7 million is broken down. You will have 48 hours, I think. I am happy to take it on notice.

**CHAIR:** I am not sure if there is a convention on time.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am happy to take it on notice, but the answer given is not comprehensive. It is one of the largest cuts in any department in the budget.

**CHAIR:** Minister, the member has asked for the question to be put on notice. If you are happy to do that, how long a time frame would be required for the department to piece it together?

**Ms DAVIS:** I am sorry, I was not listening. Did you ask for a particular period of time to have a response, member for Inala?

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** The standard is 48 hours to report back to the committee.

**CHAIR:** Forty-eight hours.

**Ms DAVIS:** It may be difficult to do that within 48 hours to get the extent that you are after. Can I throw to the CFO, who would have to provide those figures?

**Mr O'Brien:** We have factored these savings in by looking at the full year effect in 2013-14—the \$38 million that you see in Budget Paper No. 4. We have looked at how we could allocate those savings across the two years. At this point we have not looked at 2014-15. We will go back to the minister as part of the 2013-14 budget work-up to discuss strategies on how we can achieve the \$98 million in that third year. At this time we are focusing on how we can achieve the \$38 million over the next two years. I can give you a breakdown of that \$30 million.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I am happy for you to take on notice this financial year and the following financial year, if that is what you have at hand.

**Mr O'Brien:** That is what we would be able to provide.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** You take that on notice, Minister?

**Ms DAVIS:** If I could just confirm whether that can be done within the 48 hours.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** I think it is set by the committee actually.

**Ms DAVIS:** Can it be done?

**Mr O'Brien:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Woodridge.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, are you happy with the budget for your department that you have signed off on?

**Ms DAVIS:** It was really tough coming in and having to deal with a financial mess and fill a big black hole in Child Safety and maintain front-line disability supports for people who are clients of Disability Services. We were able to provide services and supports across the social inclusion spectrum. There are some organisations that would love to have received the same amount, and some actually have received the same amount this year as they did last year. It has been difficult, but tough decisions had to be made. I think we have done enormously well in order to still continue to fund organisations to provide services to Queenslanders who need our support.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, I table analysis undertaken which shows the LNP budget cuts to social services and welfare funding by \$563 million this year and factors in cuts of \$1.6 billion over three years compared with the previous government's last budget and projected funding for the same period. Minister, can you please outline what specific programs and services will be cut due to the \$1.6 billion funding cut that you are undertaking over the next three financial years?

**CHAIR:** Could I ask the member to qualify where this came from? What is the source? It is just two graphs. We do not know who has produced it. Whose document is it? Would you like to hold on to it until it has been assessed and evaluated?

**Mrs SCOTT:** We will do that.

**CHAIR:** Do you have a follow-up question?

**Mrs SCOTT:** I am waiting for the minister to respond.

**CHAIR:** To those graphs?

**Mrs SCOTT:** No, to the question. I have given the question.

**Ms PALASZCZUK:** It is all in the budget papers.

**Ms DAVIS:** I am just getting a response for you.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Thank you.

**Ms DAVIS:** I will answer one part of the question and I will wait for some more information to come through. The programs that have been ceased in my department include: community development; youth development; youth engagement; alcohol management reforms, with the majority of those due to cease at the end of December; non-government sector training programs and skilling plan; supplementing criminal history screening for disability NGOs; and HACCC information and a training program with Queensland Health. We had reductions of 17 per cent to peak bodies greater than \$500,000 and reductions of 10 per cent to multipurpose and neighbourhood centres if greater than \$100,000, to youth programs if greater than \$100,000 and to disability information and referral service and self-help services over \$500,000. There were general grants efficiency dividends as follows: a 3.75 per cent efficiency dividend applied to Child Safety and social inclusion funded services that were not identified in that list I just gave you; a 3.37 per cent efficiency dividend applied to non-24/7 homelessness services; and a one per cent efficiency dividend applied to 24/7 services in Child Safety placements, homelessness or diversionary centres.

The budgeted expenditure in 2012-13 has decreased by \$1.56 billion from 2011-12, but this decrease predominantly relates to: MoG transfers, which was \$1.2 billion; the transfer of responsibility for people with a disability aged 65 and older and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged over 50 to the Commonwealth under the National Partnership Agreement on Transitioning Responsibilities for Aged Care and Disability Services, which was \$369 million; fiscal repair savings of \$146.6 million; the transfer of the community mental health services from the department to Queensland Health of \$66 million; a reduction in funding deferrals of \$36 million; offset by growth funding of \$39.7 million; offset by indexation of \$55.6 million; and offset by additional expense measures announced in the budget of \$69.4 million.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, can you also outline what services and staff have and will be cut due to the overall decrease in estimated for social inclusion?

**Ms DAVIS:** If I could just seek some clarification as to whether you are speaking about departmental staff—

**Mrs SCOTT:** Yes.

**Ms DAVIS:** Or whether you are talking about NGO staff.

**Mrs SCOTT:** And NGO staff, the overall.

**Ms DAVIS:** I do not know that I can give you the figure for NGO staff; that is a matter for the NGO. I think we have already answered the social inclusion amount in an earlier question.

**Mrs SCOTT:** Minister, you surely must have some idea though with the large cuts that have been made to organisations.

**Ms DAVIS:** No, it depends on how large an organisation is or how small it is and what area of that large organisation may be in a particular service. We deal with organisations that deliver in child safety—

**Mrs SCOTT:** So there has been no estimation done?

**Ms DAVIS:** It is impossible to give an answer when you are talking about large organisations that might be funded in a range of areas. It might be for Child Safety and some Disability Services or it might be Child Safety and some social inclusion services. You have asked in social inclusion. I am not sure how these organisations manage their employees and where they work. It is impossible for me to give you an answer. In social inclusion, as I mentioned earlier, up to 30 June this year there was a reduction of 22 staff, but the estimate for 2013 is 148.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Capalaba.

**Mr DAVIES:** My question is for the minister. I refer to the SDS performance statement on page 13 and I note that over \$100 million is being spent on addressing homelessness in Queensland. Can the minister please advise how this will benefit those who are homeless and outline the expected reductions in homelessness as a result of the funding?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. Homelessness is still a very real problem for many Queenslanders, and many thousands face the risk of being homeless every day. As a government, we are firmly committed to tackling this problem, whether it is through a lack of affordable housing in Gladstone to rough sleepers in the Brisbane CBD. It is a commitment of the Premier, it is a commitment of mine and it is a commitment of this government to address this very serious social issue. The member is right that last year's funds totalled \$100.8 million and it was allocated to support the delivery of 246 specialist homelessness services. This year I am very pleased to say we have increased that funding to \$102 million to support 235 services.

My department uses a range of service models—including temporary accommodation with support outreach and mobile and centre based service delivery—to support people to transition from homelessness to being housed or to prevent them from becoming homeless. Key target groups for homelessness services include women and children, particularly those escaping domestic and family violence, and that is a growing concern. We have young people along with adults and families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through our specialist homelessness services, we have taken a whole-of-government approach to providing accommodation and support to people who are homeless and to supporting people who are at risk of becoming homeless to maintain their housing. We are also working to deliver over 30 initiatives under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness.

**Mr DAVIES:** Minister, you know my interest in youth issues and my support of Red Frogs and its schoolies work, having been one over a number of years. Can you advise the committee on how preparations are going for this year's schoolies response?

**Ms DAVIS:** I thank the member for the question. I remember very well sitting and speaking to a couple of gentlemen who organised what I am going to call the Red Frog brigade—

**Mr DAVIES:** Andy Gourley.

**Ms DAVIS:** Yes, and to learn about your very keen interest in that space. My department does play an integral part in keeping school leavers safe and responsible during schoolies events. That will be hosted in a number of key destinations throughout our state. Our schoolies community safety responses are scheduled to be delivered from Saturday, 17 November, to Friday, 23 November. This year over 33,000 year 12 school leavers are expected to visit these four key destinations: Airlie Beach, where they are expecting around 2,500 young people; Magnetic Island, around 300; Yeppoon, 200; and the Gold Coast, 30,000. Regional response grants recipients have received their 2012 funding to deliver volunteer support and accommodation outreach services at six locations—being Airlie Beach, the Gold Coast, Magnetic Island, Stradbroke Island, the Sunshine Coast and Yeppoon—and local government or NGO led schoolies community safety responses at three locations, that being Airlie Beach, Magnetic Island and Yeppoon. I am very pleased to inform that all regional responses are on schedule to be delivered according to plan.

The department is also on schedule to deliver the Gold Coast schoolies community safety response in conjunction with the numerous government and non-government partners. The Safer Schoolies Initiative is supported by a state-wide communication campaign to inform school leavers, parents and the community of the functions of the response and messages of safety and responsibility. A key element of the campaign is the in-school schoolies information sessions which are currently underway in 200 plus Queensland schools, and that is really important. In 2012-13 my department is providing a funding commitment of \$996,000 to support this initiative.

This government is certainly doing its part to respond to the influx of tens of thousands of young people who are expected to attend schoolies this year. It is really all about better coordination through partnerships like those with Red Frogs, increased safety for these kids and increased awareness for young people of their rights and responsibilities during schoolies week.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** I have some answers to some of the questions we took on notice if you would care to have those, or we can table them later.

**CHAIR:** I am mindful of the fact that the time has expired. Thank you, Minister.

**Ms DAVIS:** I will table them.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio of Community Services, Child Safety and Disability Services has expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, Ms Margaret Allison and your departmental officers for your attendance here tonight. The transcript of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliament's website within approximately two hours. I thank members of the government and members of the non-government for their contributions throughout the day. This completes the committee's hearing into the matters referred to it by the parliament. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee, I thank Hansard staff, the secretariat and attendants for their assistance. I declare this public hearing closed.

**Committee adjourned at 9.30 pm**