

TUESDAY, 25 AUGUST 2015

ESTIMATES—EDUCATION, TOURISM AND SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE— EDUCATION, TOURISM, MAJOR EVENTS, SMALL BUSINESS AND COMMONWEALTH GAMES

Estimate Committee Members

Mr SJ Stewart (Chair)
Dr JJ McVeigh
Mr MA Boothman
Mr SE Cramp
Ms JE Pease
Mr BM Saunders

Members in Attendance

Mrs JA Stuckey
Mr TJ Nicholls
Mr TL Mander
Mr J-P Langbroek

In Attendance

Hon. KJ Jones, Minister for Education, Minister for Tourism, Major Events and Small Business,
Minister for Commonwealth Games

Department of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games

Mr P Martyn, Acting Director-General
Ms L Brown, Chief Financial Officer
Ms S Ahern, Acting Executive Director, Small Business Division
Mr N Elliott, Assistant Director-General, Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination

Tourism and Events Queensland

Ms L Coddington, Chief Executive Officer

Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation

Mr M Peters, Chief Executive Officer

Department of Education and Training

Dr J Watterston, Director-General
Mr J Hunt, Deputy Director-General, Corporate Services
Ms P Walton, Deputy Director-General, State Schools
Mr A Black, Assistant Director-General and Chief Finance Officer

Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Mr C Rider, Chief Executive Officer

Committee met at 9.01 am

CHAIR: Good morning. I declare the hearing of estimates for the Education, Tourism and Small Business Committee open. I am Scott Stewart, the member for Townsville and chair of the committee. Dr John McVeigh, the member for Toowoomba South, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are Ms Joan Pease, the member for Lytton; Mr Mark Boothman, the member for Albert; Mr Bruce Saunders, the member for Maryborough; and Mr Sid Cramp, the member for Gaven. 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, copies of which are available from one of the parliamentary attendants in the room this morning. I ask that mobile phones or pagers be either switched off or turned to silent. I also remind you that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

This morning the committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: Tourism and Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. This afternoon the committee will examine the portfolio area of Education from 1.45 pm to 3.30 pm and from 4 pm to 5.45 pm.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. The committee will examine Tourism and Major Events from 9 am to 10.30 am, followed by a break until 11 am; Small Business from 11 am to 11.45 am; and then the Commonwealth Games from 11.45 am to 12.45 pm, followed by a one-hour break for lunch.

The committee has granted leave to attend for those MPs who seek it. They are Mr Lawrence Springborg, Leader of the Opposition; Mr John-Paul Langbroek, Deputy Leader of the Opposition; Mr Tim Nicholls, member for Clayfield; Mr Jeff Seeney, member for Callide; Ms Jann Stuckey, member for Currumbin; and Mr Tim Mander, member for Everton. I welcome the member for Currumbin.

I remind those present today that these proceedings are similar to parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. I remind members of the public that under the standing orders the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply here. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115, and therefore questions should be brief, relate to one issue and not contain lengthy or subjective preambles or argument or opinion.

I intend to 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 government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind ministers, the director-general, CEOs and their advisers that answers to questions should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome to the hearing the minister, the Hon. Kate Jones, the Acting Director-General, Mr Paul Martyn, the CEO of Tourism and Events Queensland, Ms Leanne Coddington, officials and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials 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 Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement? The committee has resolved that you may make an opening statement of up to five minutes.

Ms JONES: Thank you, Chair, and committee members for being here this morning. I am very proud to be the first tourism minister in Queensland to deliver a four-year funding guarantee. Our investment is \$400 million over four years. It is a sign of just how important the industry is to Queensland and, indeed, to the Palaszczuk government. We know that our tourism industry supports more than 230,000 jobs and injects around \$23 billion into the Queensland economy. That represents 10 per cent of the Queensland workforce and 7.6 per cent of the gross state product. Every \$100 million generated in tourism supports around 1,000 jobs. That is why we are committed to growing our tourism industry.

Our investment includes \$128 million over four years to restore secure based funding to \$90 million and \$40 million to grow and promote events around Queensland. We know that every dollar invested in tourism marketing returns around \$15 to the Queensland economy, and events drive visitors

to our region throughout the year so providing appropriate funding for Tourism and Events Queensland is good for everyone. Our investment is supporting Queensland's 51,400 tourism related businesses, with 58 per cent of these located in regional areas.

We have boosted investment in the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund by \$10 million. We know just how important it is to secure new additional flights to Queensland. Every new flight brings more tourists to our doorstep. That is why we are supporting Tourism and Events Queensland in its efforts to negotiate new partnerships with airlines. Our four-year funding certainty also provides the tourism industry with the confidence it needs to negotiate over the longer term. No longer will it need to come cap in hand to government every budget cycle. Instead, now with funding security TEQ can negotiate multiyear partnerships and look more strategically at events that bring real benefits to Queensland.

I am optimistic about the future of tourism in Queensland. The latest Tourism Research Australia data shows international visitors spent a record \$4.4 billion in Queensland last year. International travel increased to all Queensland destinations including the Sunshine Coast, which was up by 14 per cent, the Whitsundays, up by 30 per cent, Tropical North Queensland and Brisbane up by seven per cent, and the Gold Coast up by six per cent. We know this growth was in part due to the falling Australian dollar and the recovering global economy.

In looking to the future, my focus is on growing the industry through investment in marketing and events, in aviation access and in job creation. Tourism and Events Queensland, in partnership with industry, does an incredible job in marketing Queensland to Australia and, indeed, the world. The Palaszczuk government will continue to provide real and lasting support to grow this vital industry for Queensland and for Queenslanders.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Currumbin.

Mrs STUCKEY: I thank the committee for allowing me to appear today. At the outset I would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of the former DG, Dr Richard Eden, whose name appears on these budget papers. I would like to say that the termination of his contract and the manner in which it was done was absolutely shameful.

My question to the minister. The estimates manual states that answers to questions on notice must be provided by 10 am the day before the committee's hearing. Answers were not provided, Minister, until around 4.30 pm yesterday afternoon.

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, they actually were provided to the research director by the allotted time.

Mrs STUCKEY: Chair, with respect, my question is to the minister. If the minister provided answers prior to 10 am, what discussions took place between you and the chair of this committee between the time they were lodged and the time that lapsed—6½ hours later?

Ms JONES: None. I would like to reconfirm what the chair just said. They were lodged by my office at 10 am.

CHAIR: And received by the research director by 10 am.

Mrs STUCKEY: Chair, last week we saw a protection racket here as ministers were shielded from answering questions. It would appear that the protection racket for this minister commenced yesterday—

Ms JONES: Honourable member for Currumbin, I answered your question. You asked a question; I answered it. The chair did not intervene and tell you that you could not ask me a question. You asked a question and I answered it, so I do not know what you are going on about there.

Mrs STUCKEY: Then a very serious question needs to be asked as to why they were withheld. Is this going to be the pattern of the week as we shield ministers by giving committee members less time?

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, can you explain to the committee how your question is relevant to the consideration of the budget estimates?

Mrs STUCKEY: It is very relevant, Mr Chair, to the procedures that are outlined in the estimates manual. This is an unprecedented effort we have seen so far.

Ms JONES: I would like to make a comment if possible, Chair. Let us be very clear: the honourable member for Currumbin asked a question; I answered it. Let me be very clear so it is on the public record: my understanding is that all questions on notice were lodged by my office by the allotted time of 10 am. In addition, I can confirm that no conversations were held between you and me on that

day between 10 am and the time the honourable member is talking about. Honourable member, I think you are raising a very valid point. I, too, like you, would like to know what the delay was. That is a matter for the parliament and I think we can get an answer from the parliament on that. Like you, I would not have bothered getting them in by 10 am if you were not going to get them until the afternoon. I would not have worked that hard to make sure I met the deadline, but I did meet the deadline and I share your concerns if you did not get them until later in the afternoon, and I agree with you that that should be looked at. But for you to then go on with that other thing that you were talking about I think is a very long bow.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Minister. I refer to your answer to question on notice 15 in relation to your claims of restoring funding to the tourism industry, and I ask: why will you not provide a detailed breakdown, including documentation, as I requested, to support your claim of \$188 million?

Ms JONES: I am very happy to table the document which was provided to me by Tourism and Events Queensland at one of the very first meetings I had. When I became the Minister for Tourism I met with all the key stakeholders including Stephen Gregg, who was the chair of the Tourism and Events Queensland board at that time. I seek leave to table that letter that I received from him at my first meeting. In this meeting Stephen Gregg said the following things. It was a letter addressed from him to me and also attached is a letter from him to the former treasurer of Queensland, the honourable member for Clayfield. I would like to refer to this letter for the parliament. In it he referred to a letter to the former treasurer which indicated that the previous government had reduced core funding for Tourism and Events Queensland and that in the 2015-16 financial year they were going back to \$65 million.

Just to give context to the committee, the TEQ budget for the 2013-14 year was around \$101 million. In his letter he actually said that that was being cut back. He also provided me with this table, which I seek leave to table, which is the forward estimates provided to him by the previous government. When you add up the cuts in the outyears, it adds up to \$188 million. This was a shock to me. We knew when we were in opposition that the LNP government were planning and had planned to cut funding for Tourism and Events Queensland. We committed to restoring some funding.

One of the first things I had to do as Minister for Tourism when I became fully aware of the picture—and I know for a fact that the Treasurer, who served in opposition, who was instrumental in securing the election commitment to restore funding for Tourism and Events Queensland, was just as shocked as I was when we actually discovered the extent of the hole in the forward estimates of the LNP government. They planned to halve the amount of money over the next four years that they were going to invest in Tourism and Events Queensland. Either the honourable member for Currumbin denies that this is true or she is accusing the former TEQ chair of making it up. I do not know about you, but I am going to go with the TEQ chair.

In that regard, the next thing I had to do was go to cabinet, to the CBRC, to secure funding. As I said in my opening comments, I am very proud to be sitting here today saying that we now have \$400 million allocated for Tourism and Events Queensland over the next four years. That is because we have gone to restore the funding clearly identified in the forward estimates by the previous government that was going to be halved.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Do you seek leave to table the document?

Ms JONES: Yes.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mrs STUCKEY: I thank the minister for sharing information that she would not give me in question on notice No. 15.

Ms JONES: I have said it in parliament many, many times.

Mrs STUCKEY: I also have a document from the current CEO, which was certainly common knowledge—it is dated January 2014—that indicates that Treasury had some estimates that were not at all palatable to the tourism industry. These were never adopted and I really think it is appalling that the minister was scaremongering. I refer her to page 64—

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, do you seek leave to table the document?

Mrs STUCKEY: No, I do not. It is online, I presume, if the CEO had it and was sharing it with all of the RTOs. Page 64 of the budget measures for 2015-16 refers to the restoration of funding for Tourism and Events Queensland of \$128.3 million across the forward estimates until 2018-19. If you are, indeed, restoring funding, as you claim, of \$188 million, why have you actually cut real funding by approximately \$60 million over the forward estimates?

Ms JONES: I want to say two things. Firstly, in answering the preamble that the honourable member included in her question, she said that those forward estimates were never going to be instigated. I say to the committee that there was a budget midyear review in December, just weeks prior to the election, when no money was secured for Tourism and Events Queensland. Despite saying that these forward estimates were fake, the chance to actually restore funding was at the midyear budget review in December and that never happened. No funding was secured.

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order, Mr Chair. The minister is misleading. I did not use the word 'fake'. I said that these were figures that I recognised but were not adopted, and they certainly were not adopted at the midyear fiscal budget review in December; she is correct.

Ms JONES: Thank you. I now have on parliamentary record that she recognises these figures because these figures were the forward estimates of the LNP government. As the former tourism minister, in her time she failed to correct this so went to the election with those cuts and did not include that in their policy document.

Mr CRAMP: Mr Chair, this is unnecessary preamble.

Mrs STUCKEY: Again, I take a point of order that the minister is accusing me of falsity. As she would know being a former minister herself, Treasury does forward estimates all the time and the figures are not set in stone.

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, do you have another question for the minister?

Mrs STUCKEY: I do have another question for the minister. The industry has been telling me that they believe that this is a smoke and mirrors campaign by Labor to blame the LNP for their own tourism cuts. Page 38 of the SDS shows the actual budget for 2014-15 was \$110.2 million and Labor's for 2015-16 is \$112.5 million. Labor's own Growth for Tourism Guarantee, the January election document, states that the LNP cut over \$20 million in 2014 from TEQ and that Labor would boost it by \$40 million over four years. How on earth can you explain that—your own election document?

Ms JONES: Thank you so much. I take great joy in answering this question. First of all, I will go to the funding and then I will go to your allegations that the tourism industry is telling you that they are unhappy with the funding guarantee that has been delivered and the \$400 million that has been delivered—

Mrs STUCKEY: Point of order, Mr Chair. I did not say that the industry was unhappy. The minister is verballing me and I object. I want her to withdraw—

Ms JONES: Sorry, can you read it again, because I thought at the beginning you talked about the industry reaction. You can reread it if you like because I thought you implied that they were not happy with it.

Mrs STUCKEY: It is on the *Hansard*.

CHAIR: Minister, can I ask you to respond, thank you.

Ms JONES: You did say that industry was concerned about the funding.

Mrs STUCKEY: They are telling me that it is a smoke and mirrors campaign.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. I will ask the minister to respond.

Ms JONES: Sorry, I interpreted that—

Mrs STUCKEY: It is different to 'fake'.

Ms JONES: I did not say 'fake'.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. I call the minister.

Ms JONES: There are two things. One is that our funding guarantee is being delivered in a number of programs. One is TEQ funding in the forward estimates, the base funding that was there, and, as the honourable member for Currumbin, the former minister, acknowledges it was the base funding that she did have in the forward estimates. So that base funding was there and we have honoured that. In addition, we have added our restoration funding. That goes up each year from \$24.5 million in the first year to \$31.4 million in the second year, to \$37.6 million and up to \$34.7 million. In addition to that, we have the election commitment that the honourable member has mentioned which is an additional \$10 million annually. That brings you to the restoration figures. We also, of course, have the AAIF funding.

The honourable member is absolutely correct when she says that what we delivered in our election commitment, which was meant to be \$40 million additional to what was actually delivered in the budget, has substantially changed. You are right; originally we said that we would just have the \$40 million. Instead, I think the additional funding I secured was \$168 million. That gives you a really clear understanding of what we discovered when we came to government and what we had to restore. I am absolutely happy to take the comment from the honourable member that what we said in our election commitment and what we have ended up delivering in government is completely different. You are right; we promised \$40 million and we have delivered \$168 million additional.

Mrs STUCKEY: Minister, I refer to your question on notice No. 16 in relation to Queensland's RTO funding. What confidence can RTOs have that they will have existing funding maintained when in your reply there is no definitive, guaranteed amount of core funding for 2015-16? It merely says 'up to' an amount of funding, when under the LNP there was a guaranteed base amount of core funding?

Ms JONES: Firstly, they can have absolute confidence because for the first time we have not forward estimates that, as you say, were estimates by Treasury, but we actually have a decision by government to fund TEQ funding, which includes the RTO funding. So the RTO funding comes out of the TEQ funding. We have a funding guarantee which means that, for the first time, over the next four years they can have absolute security about doing that.

In the answer that the honourable member is referring to, I stipulate what funding is available for them. Am I going to walk away from funding RTO organisations? Of course I am not. Clearly, I have allocated funding in this year's budget and I will continue to do so. We know that the 13 different RTOs across Queensland do a great job. Now, like everybody else in industry, they can have real confidence that they will continue to get this funding because for the very first time in Queensland's history we now have that funding locked in in a four-year funding guarantee.

Mrs STUCKEY: I thank the minister for that because a number of the RTOs—I am still on the reply to question on notice No. 16—do not believe that they have been given assurance—they certainly have had none from Tourism and Events Queensland—that they will get the four-year funding guaranteed. There is also a great concern—

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, is there a question, please?

Mrs STUCKEY: Yes. Why has the minister not done the same for the RTOs? Perhaps we could ask the Tourism and Events Queensland CEO to assure us that the four-year guarantees will be there for the RTOs.

Ms JONES: I am happy for you to answer. We are on the same page in this regard. We have had numerous conversations about RTO funding. Leanne, if you want to speak you can. We are on the same page. We meet regularly. Talking about the work that the RTOs do is something we talk about regularly. It was also something that was discussed with the Tourism and Events Queensland board. The new board was appointed recently. We had the first meeting of that board last week and I had the opportunity to talk to them. They are the ones who help make the decision about the allocation of Tourism and Events Queensland funding.

CHAIR: Minister, can I just redirect that the question was actually asked to the CEO.

Ms JONES: Yes, that is fine. I was just about to throw to her. I just say that we are as one on this.

Ms Coddington: I thank the honourable member for the question. We support the RTO network with grant funding. An amount of \$7 million out of the TEQ's budget each year is directed to the RTOs. This year that funding was made up of two components: core grant funding as well as contestable grant funding. Each of the RTOs received up to \$300,000 in core grant funding and the majority of them have received contestable funding as well. I can go through the breakdown if you desire?

Mrs STUCKEY: No, I do not need that, but I do have a very important question relating to that. Given that the RTO funding does rely on some council funds as well, are regions like the drought-ravaged outback and cyclone-affected Yeppoon going to be jeopardised if they cannot raise those funds?

Ms JONES: We answered that in the question on notice. The last paragraph of the answer to question on notice No. 16 that was provided to you states—

The Core Grant provided by TEQ in 2015–16 will match dollar for dollar up to \$300,000 the contributions made by the RTO's local government partners for tourism projects and activities with special arrangements for Outback Queensland Tourism Association and Southern Queensland Country Tourism.

Having been the tourism minister for three years, you would know that the special arrangements are about the fact that we recognise that Outback Queensland Tourism and Southern Queensland Country Tourism cannot get the matching funds from council like the other larger organisations can. Those special arrangements that were rightly in place when you were the minister have continued under me as the minister, and that is clearly articulated in the answer.

Mrs STUCKEY: I am sorry, Minister, but it did not. You just referred to one year. We are talking about the four years that I asked for a guarantee for all of those RTOs. Unfortunately, droughts do not just last for one year. We have seen a very long one.

Ms JONES: Sorry, I thought you would have understood that we know that Outback Queensland Tourism, drought or no drought, is not going to all of a sudden get a windfall of funding from local councils that rightly will be recovering from the drought if, God willing, it breaks. The reality is we will keep those special arrangements in place.

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, do you have further questions?

Mrs STUCKEY: Yes, I do. I refer to page 3 of the SDS in relation to DestinationQ 2015 in Townsville. Given that the minister criticised the LNP for lower numbers in the Whitsundays in her media release, why is she not holding the DestinationQ conference there as it is one of the big five?

Ms JONES: We are having it in Townsville because a number of organisations have asked us to have it there. I think Townsville has a lot to offer. I think it has a growing tourism industry there and they are working really hard to do that. I see the honourable member for Townsville nodding. He knows that Townsville wants to diversify its economy having grown their tourism sector as one of their key focuses.

In regard to the Whitsundays, I understand that the former minister was also approached to hold the DestinationQ forum in the Whitsundays when she was the minister and she declined. I am happy to table that letter. I seek leave to table the letter from the former minister to the member for Whitsundays, Mr Jason Costigan, in which she says that she will not commit to holding it in the Whitsundays, despite Mr Costigan repeating in the media that there was a commitment. I have it in writing that there was none.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. Member for Currumbin, you can ask one last question, please.

Mrs STUCKEY: Minister, will the annual state of the industry report be delivered as per the agreement at this year's forum? As you do not have a dedicated tourism cabinet committee of a number of ministers across a variety of portfolios, how are you going to justify doing a state of the industry report?

Ms JONES: Thank you for the question. Yes, is the answer. I am really confused as to why the honourable member does not think that there is a dedicated committee for tourism in Queensland under the current government. We do have a committee of the cabinet which is called the Tourism and Commonwealth Games Committee because we recognise that given the Commonwealth Games—

Mrs STUCKEY: It was not a dedicated committee in your election commitment. Your election commitment specifies—

CHAIR: Order!

Ms JONES: I want to get this clear. The member for Currumbin is on the public record arguing against me expanding the tourism committee of the cabinet to the Tourism and Commonwealth Games Committee. As the Minister for Tourism, I recognise that the largest event to be held in Queensland—

Mrs STUCKEY: That was not your election commitment. You have broken an election promise.

Ms JONES: And it is one that I am so proud of, honourable member, because it recognises that when you want to grow tourism you invest in events. What is the largest event that we are holding in Queensland—indeed, the country—over the next decade? It is the Commonwealth Games, which will stimulate \$2 billion for the Queensland economy. Do I, as the tourism minister, think there is huge potential to grow tourism, not only in your home of the Gold Coast but also across Queensland? Absolutely! Will I be working as the minister with the cabinet committee to ensure we reach full potential when it comes to growing tourism? Absolutely! Apart from the honourable opposition spokesperson, has anyone from the tourism industry criticised me for saying that we should be elevating the Commonwealth games as the major tourism event attractor in Queensland? No, not one person. Every single person that I have spoken to on the Gold Coast—from the editor of the *Gold Coast Bulletin*, to the mayor, to your colleagues on the Gold Coast—have said that this is a great idea because it is recognising the potential this will have for the tourism industry as the major legacy of the

Commonwealth Games. As the honourable member and the committee know, we will have 1.5 billion eyes on the beautiful Gold Coast for the duration of the Commonwealth Games. Do I recognise that the biggest legacy out of the Commonwealth Games is tourism? You betcha!

Mrs STUCKEY: You broke an election promise.

Ms JONES: Am I going to make sure that we have a whole-of-government commitment to it? Absolutely! I am very, very proud that we have elevated the Commonwealth Games to that committee. As you know—and we can talk about it later during our session on the Commonwealth Games—this has been overwhelmingly recognised as a great move for Queensland.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 64 of Budget Paper No. 4, 'Tourism and Events Queensland restoration of funding', can the minister outline why a four-year commitment of funding was needed?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said in my opening address, since becoming the Minister for Tourism I have met with tourism operators and stakeholders from right across this state. I am told consistently by industry that they want their peak marketing and event body, Tourism and Events Queensland, to be strategic in its decision-making and to have the ability for the first time to make long-term funding decisions and commitments so we can have major events like we have already in Townsville.

The lack of certainty and funding really were key contributors to inhibiting long-term planning for the tourism sector. For example, the chief executive of the Queensland Tourism and Industry Council, Daniel Gschwind, said during the election campaign that the industry was only interested in looking forward. After the release of the LNP's election commitment Mr Gschwind said—

What remains to be seen is what the funding levels will be for the Queensland Government's own marketing body, Tourism and Events Queensland.

This is the kind of uncertainty that existed for Queensland tourism under the LNP. These views have been consistent across the industry, including from TEQ's own board. I tabled the letter from the former chair of the TEQ board where very clearly he articulates his concerns about not having the funding certainty they needed to attract new events to Queensland. As I said, Stephen Gregg wrote to the former treasurer in December 2015 and listed the renewals and program announcements that were not funded within TEQ's base budget. These programs include 11 major events, business events funding, regional event funding and contestable grant funding for regional tourism organisations. Mr Gregg wrote to me within weeks of becoming minister and in that correspondence included his letter to the former treasurer. I have tabled those letters for the benefit of the committee.

It is also worth noting that the former treasurer never bothered to reply to the chair, and no commitment was made to restore the funding before the previous election. When in opposition we were aware that funding for tourism had been cut. We got wind of that from discussions that the opposition had while we were in opposition. When I became the minister we examined those budgets very closely, and we have restored that funding as I have articulated. You will see on page 64 of Budget Paper No. 4 the level of funding that we have delivered—and I have articulated that in an earlier answer to the honourable member for Currumbin: \$128 million over four years to restore secure base funding to the \$90 million; \$40 million to grow and promote events; plus we have boosted the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund by \$10 million.

I should also put on the record that recently the honourable member for Currumbin, I think in the budget reply debate, spoke about the \$60 million they had committed during the election. Just to be clear, that funding was to be shared between TEQ and Screen Queensland at \$20 million a year. On the public record it was also said that it was about attracting screen, so it was not actually base funding or support for TEQ in the sense that this other funding is.

Mrs STUCKEY: I rise to a point of order. The minister is misleading the committee. That \$60 million was for Tourism and Events Queensland and Screen Queensland. It was going to be held outside of Tourism and Events Queensland. I ask her to withdraw.

Ms JONES: What I was trying to say is that my understanding was the \$60 million was to attract film here. It was not funding that could be spent, for example, on a campaign to come to the Whitsundays; it had to be about attracting film to Queensland.

Mrs STUCKEY: As it was our policy and not yours—

CHAIR: Order! We are not here to debate.

Mrs STUCKEY: The minister is verballing me again and she is saying things that are untrue. That \$60 million was on top of the core funding—

CHAIR: We are not here to debate. Do you have anything further, Minister?

Ms JONES: I have finished.

Ms PEASE: Would you be able to outline what impact this four-year funding has had on events for Queensland?

Ms JONES: Thank you very much. As I said, four-year funding allows the tourism industry and Tourism and Events Queensland for the very first time to operate with certainty. TEQ will be able to plan on a longer-term basis with the assurance that their funding is locked in for the next four years. Funding certainty will enable TEQ to enter into multiyear partnerships and look more strategically at events and marketing investment with tourism and events operators in Queensland's regions. TEQ can also consider retaining high-value events with longer planning cycles that will deliver better visitation growth.

Without this funding certainty events were at risk. I refer again to the letter from Stephen Gregg to the former treasurer where he specifically states that 11 major events contracts were not funded as part of the base funding. As you have heard, this was the only funding that was secured ahead of the election. TEQ would have been required to look to Treasury for handouts at these events, and I am happy to go through some of the events that we have been able to secure since we have this new funding. As a result of Labor's election commitment and my efforts to support tourism and the industry, the additional funding which has been highlighted by the honourable member went from \$40 million to \$168 million since we have been in government.

I have had the privilege to announce the following new and renewing major events: World Bowls Championship on 12 March 2020; NRL Anzac Test, Australia versus New Zealand; NetFest; Brisbane Racing Carnival; Great Barrier Reef Masters Games; World Science Festival; International Triathlon Union World Triathlon Series Grand Final and age group world championships; and Medieval Power: Symbols and Splendour, which will be held next year as well.

Leanne Coddington, as the CEO of Tourism and Events Queensland, is the one who lives and breathes this. She is the one who negotiates with the parties to try to attract these major events here to Queensland, whether it is NRL, the AFL or Manchester, which I know the previous minister was also very passionate about. Can you tell the committee what it means to you to have that funding security?

Ms Coddington: Thank you, Minister. We often negotiate with potential proponents for events many years in advance. They have long lead times, and we need that surety of funding in the outyears to be able to enter into those negotiations in good faith.

Ms PEASE: Can the minister detail the response from stakeholders?

Ms JONES: I can indeed. Contrary to some assertions that have been made, I can say what I have seen. Whether it be in the media, meetings that I have attended, industry forums or people who have come back to me saying what they have heard locally with regard to our government's record investment in tourism and the first-time four-year funding guarantee we have delivered in Queensland, we have overwhelming support from the tourism sector. Margy Osmond from the Tourism and Transport Forum said—

I welcome the Queensland government's decision to restore funding to Tourism and Events Queensland over the next four years. Reversing the former government's planned funding cut was a key ask of TTF in our Queensland election agenda and we are pleased the Palaszczuk government has listened to the industry.

Daniel Gschwind of the Tourism Industry Council said—

From a business perspective I think the budget sets the right priorities. It is fiscally responsible, it focuses on infrastructure, and importantly for the tourism sector it focuses on job creation. Jobs are on offer in tourism and there will be even more if we drive opportunities. The funding certainty for Tourism and Events Queensland for marketing over the next four years gives more confidence to industry and more confidence to the agencies that have to make this happen for tourism, and we are certainly encouraged by that.

Paul Donovan, the chair of Gold Coast Tourism, said—

Thanks to the budget boost plus Tourism Australia's marketing campaigns and extra funds provided by the Gold Coast City Council, destination marketing for this city will be lifted.

Restaurant and Catering Australia CEO John Hart said—

A long-term approach to tourism and major events funding provides tourism and hospitality operators with confidence to invest in their businesses.

I see the honourable member nodding, because when you build business confidence that is when you know you are creating jobs. That is what this funding has done. He goes on to say—

This drives economic activity and creates jobs in this state.

He further states that he is encouraged by the budget. As the minister for small business and industry I want to say that that is really important to me because we know that a lot of restaurant and catering businesses are small businesses. He says that the industry remains committed to achieving the goal of growing tourism.

The CEO of Sunshine Coast Destination, Simon Ambrose, said there were some good government commitments to marketing events for the region, and ‘hopefully we will be able to get more money for marketing now because of the funding guarantee.’ The CEO of Whitsundays Marketing and Development Limited says, ‘This is wonderful news for our industry.’ That is what they are saying on the Whitsundays. ‘I congratulate your government on the commitment to funding tourism in the coming years, in particular a four-year funding commitment.’

Outback Aussie Tour operator and RTO board member Alan Smith said this about the budget: ‘Fantastic news with this budget announcement. Great certainty. Builds confidence. Confidence builds business. Well done. This is great support for our industry working in partnership with government.’

Overwhelmingly I am of the view that industry has unilaterally welcomed the investment that has been delivered by the first year of the Palaszczuk government.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, in the opposition leader’s budget reply speech he said—

If the quantum of funding is all that matters, the opposition thanks the Abbott government for contributing more than half of Tourism and Events Queensland’s budget. The federal government is contributing \$88.5 million compared to the state’s contribution of \$77.2.

Can the minister please identify where in the SDS this funding is listed?

Ms JONES: Yes, I can. Once again the Leader of the Opposition has been caught out not doing his homework in the sense that this is money that was actually for the Commonwealth Games. I want to put on the public record that the federal government has from day one in a bipartisan way, and as we saw at a state level in a bipartisan way, given support for the Commonwealth Games—well, I thought there was—and what we have seen is a commitment to that. What is wrong is the Leader of the Opposition saying in his budget reply speech that this money was to grow tourism. There is no money that has gone to TEQ from the federal government for the TEQ budget, unless there is 85 million bucks lying around that you have not told me about, Leanne. No? Do you want that on the record? You have not got \$85 million directly from the federal government to you?

Ms Coddington: No, I have not received that.

Ms JONES: No, that is right. So I think it is very curious that your leader—the Leader of the Opposition—is on the parliamentary record saying that there was \$85 million for tourism and for Tourism and Events Queensland to do their marketing. That is not the case. I would love to get funding from the Abbott government. I would love to get funding for Gold Coast city light rail from the Abbott government too. Mr Chair, I am sure you would love to get funding matched for the Townsville stadium, but what we have seen—and similarly like we will see this afternoon in Education—is the Abbott government walk away from a lot of the key infrastructure that will drive jobs here in Queensland. So I answer the question by saying that I, like you, was perplexed to see why these comments were made by the Leader of the Opposition. Either he did not read his budget papers properly or he did not read his budget papers properly.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to the SDS at page 38 relating to the Tourism and Events Queensland income statement, can the minister outline what impact the smaller board has on the TEQ budget?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. When I became the minister, as I have said repeatedly this morning, the No. 1 issue for me that was raised by industry was certainty. For me that meant a couple of things. One was that we had to get the funding secured. As you have heard me repeatedly talk about this morning, we have done that and I am very proud of that. Secondly, everybody from the Tourism and Events Queensland board came to me saying that they felt that the board was too big and it was unwieldy. I do really want to acknowledge the decisions of the former minister. I think that having the combined Tourism and Events Queensland board instead of two separate boards was a good decision and the right decision and she did a very good job in that regard.

We have continued that, but some of the feedback I got from day one was that, even though there was the amalgamation of the two boards, it was too big; they had not actually reduced the number of people on the board to the extent that it needed to be. I understand it was a transition, and I acknowledge that.

During my time as the minister I have listened to industry and I announced a new board which has gone from 14 to nine. As part of that decision, I also wanted to have a look at the mix of skills and regions represented on that board. I am very pleased to say, as I referred to earlier, that their first meeting was held last week and I had the privilege of sitting down with the new Tourism and Events Queensland board. Indeed, all members of the committee and indeed all Queenslanders can have faith that we have a very good board. A number of them are continuing to serve from the previous board appointed by the previous minister, but we also have some fresh blood with some new ideas. Most importantly, we have members that represent the Whitsundays, Cairns and the Gold Coast as well as across sectors including aviation, events and marketing.

The board is now headed by Bob East. As the CEO of the Mantra Group, Mr East has been responsible for strengthening the company's brand and developing the group into one of the leading accommodation providers and marketers in Australasia. I see a few of you nodding. I am sure that many members of the committee may have stayed at a Mantra hotel during their time. Mr East, as I am sure the honourable member for Currumbin would agree, is well respected and highly regarded within the tourism sector and of course is a Gold Coaster. Mr East's experience includes serving as a board member of the Gold Coast Tourism Corporation, Tourism and Transport Forum, Tourism Accommodation Australia, Gold Coast Football Club and is also chair of the Tourism and Transport Forum's Accommodation Sector Panel. In addition, the new board also consists of the continuing deputy chairperson, Julieanne Alroe. She is the CEO and managing director of the Brisbane Airport Corporation.

Another board member is Gary Smith from the Fraser Coast. People might know Gary as the non-executive chairman of the Flight Centre Travel Group. He has huge industry information. I actually met Gary many years ago when I was the environment minister with regard to trying to grow tourism on Fraser Island. He is the managing director of Tourism Leisure Corporation and the Kingfisher Bay Resort. Another board member is Anna Guillan from the Whitsundays. She is the regional director of sales and marketing Australia and New Zealand of Kerzner International which manages Hayman Island in the Whitsundays. Another board member is Professor Judith McLean, who is a professor of arts education and creative industries at the Queensland University of Technology. Overwhelmingly people refer to Judith as the 'events expert', so it is wonderful that she has continued.

With regard to new appointments, there is Karen Hanna Miller. She is a company director of TPD Media and is chair of the Outback Queensland Tourism Association and director of Media Potential. Paul Donovan is a well-known Gold Coaster and the executive general manager and chair of the Gold Coast Tourism Board. There is also Michael Healy, the group director of sales and marketing for the Quicksilver group—one of the key tourism companies in Cairns.

I think it is fair to say that we have a very broad diversity of skills on the board and they are gung-ho ready to go. Now that they know they have the funding guarantee, they really see that as an opportunity to capitalise, as I said in my opening address, on the change in market conditions where we believe we will actually see growth in the tourism industry. I will just finish by saying that at the first board meeting I was also able to articulate what my key priorities are, as endorsed by the cabinet committee, for what we believe as a government will help us grow tourism and create new tourism jobs. They include the Great Barrier Reef and ecotourism, promoting international education, fostering quality and innovation in the industry—and this is one of the key reasons we are linking the opportunities with the Commonwealth Games in tourism, because we actually see that as a real way for us to grow skills and to lift industry standards—focusing on growing the Asian market and attracting major events to Queensland. Does that cover it?

CHAIR: Yes, I think so. Thank you, Minister. It is now time for questions from non-government members.

Dr McVEIGH: Minister, I refer to page 33 of the SDS in relation to the new Queensland Destination Events Program announced in May of this year. Given the criteria for that program has changed for significant event funding—and I refer to three-year funding arrangements—can you as minister provide any assurance to established and developing regional events that were funded under the previous program? I mention by way of example very significant regional events such as the Julia Creek Dirt n Dust Festival, the Airlie Beach Race Week and one that I am quite familiar with, the FKG Tour of Toowoomba, an event developing quite significantly in recent years.

Ms JONES: Thank you. The answer is, yes, I will be announcing regional tourism grants very soon for those events. I absolutely strongly believe that having major regional events right across Queensland is critical for the communities that you represent and genuinely want to see continue. So my answer is absolutely. I can give you a guarantee and they should have a guarantee, because, once again, that funding comes out of the funding I have been talking about all morning which is the funding that we now have which, for the very first time, is secured funding.

Do I want to see growth in regional events like the ones you have articulated? Absolutely, and that is why it is critical that we do have the funding guaranteed so there is more to be shared around those events. I can advise the honourable member that when we announce the funding for those regional events in the very near future I will make sure that he knows in advance so he can communicate that to his local community as well. Is there anything you wanted to add to that from your perspective?

Ms Coddington: Thank you, Minister. The review of the program was all about helping to grow those events and have a pathway for regional events to grow over time into being significant and then major events.

Ms JONES: So I think we are in agreeance.

Dr McVEIGH: Minister, I look forward to that announcement and details that will be forthcoming as you have promised. But in the meantime I note that the Queensland Destination Events Program is open to applications from the Brisbane City Council area by way of example. Would that suggest, therefore, that in the meantime it makes it harder for regional events to apply to gain funding if they are in fact up against the likes of the Brisbane City Council?

Ms Coddington: The previous program, as you rightly say, did not allow events from within that footprint. As you would recognise, there are many regional type events or smaller events that do happen within that footprint, so it was to offer an equal playing field. But there are a lot of events in Brisbane that are in that major events status. The event still needs to fit within the criteria of what would be a destination event.

Ms JONES: So you are right; it is a scaling, just to be clear. Even though Brisbane City Council is included, it still has to be at that level. The major events that can be held in Brisbane would go through the major events funding, not the funding program you are talking about. So I think it is fair to say that we definitely want to see the continuation of the smaller regional events growing into bigger regional events and ultimately major events if there is enough interest and the ability to do so. So I just want to give an assurance to you that as the Minister for Tourism I do believe that as we work with Queenslanders to diversify our economy right across the state we encourage and work with local regional tourism organisations to grow those major events like you mentioned in your question right across Queensland, and that is the overwhelming view that I am hearing from industry as well.

Dr McVEIGH: As a final question, the Queensland Destination Events Program that we have been discussing as announced in May will be followed up, are you suggesting, with a new program specifically designed for the regions?

Ms JONES: It is the same program.

Dr McVEIGH: So the conditions for the regions will be released; is that what you are suggesting will be coming—

Ms JONES: That has already been released.

Ms Coddington: That has already been released. The minister released that back in May.

Dr McVEIGH: I refer to the minister's answer a few moments ago where the minister was referring to an announcement in the near future.

Ms JONES: That is who is being successful.

Ms Coddington: Yes, of the first round. So we opened up the first round recently and the announcement of who is going to receive funding in the first round of that program is imminent.

Dr McVEIGH: So when would you expect to be making that announcement?

Ms JONES: Next week.

Dr McVEIGH: Thank you, Minister.

Mrs STUCKEY: Minister, I refer to the SDS at page 33 relating to Destination Tourism Plans, which are about maximising each destination's competitive advantage. Given that tourism is the livelihood of destinations, particularly the Gold Coast and Cairns, and important to many others, is the minister concerned that her government's plan to repeal the VLAD laws will damage the perception of a destination's competitive advantage with regard to safety?

Ms JONES: I think we have made it very clear on the public record numerous times that we are absolutely committed to combating organised crime in this state, and that was a clear election promise of our government. We are serious about tackling all forms of organised crime, whether it be extortion and money laundering, networked child sex offences, illicit drug markets or criminal motorcycle gangs. To this end, we believe that this requires a well-developed and comprehensive approach. We will review the VLAD legislation, but we made the commitment that we absolutely want to keep the strict laws in place with regard to not just motorcycle gangs but all outlaw crime. I am confident that under this government we will continue to have strong laws which perturb all offenders no matter what their offence to ensure we continue to be tough on crime.

What I am most concerned about, though, when you talk about reputational risk was what we saw with regard to the previous government's total—total—abandonment of protecting the Great Barrier Reef. The minister knows, as I do, that more than 60,000 Queenslanders rely—you mentioned Cairns in your question—on the Great Barrier Reef for their jobs and it generates more than \$6 billion for the Queensland economy. We have come to government with a very clear policy of protecting the Great Barrier Reef, and this is not just us saying it. You know about our \$100 million commitment versus the former government's \$2.4 million marketing campaign which they had to abandon because, as I understand, their advice was that no-one trusted them when it came to protecting the Great Barrier Reef—this is something I am quite passionate about—because they know that one of the first things they did was walk away from the reef protection laws that I put in place as the environment minister.

I, like everyone, was so pleased to see that UNESCO recognised the great work that we were doing to protect the Great Barrier Reef. In actual fact, in the Portugal intervention they explicitly acknowledge that one of the key reasons they were able to have faith that the Great Barrier Reef was going to be protected in the future was the election of the new government in Queensland, which has indeed created a new and very welcome resolve in addressing the challenges and threats to the Great Barrier Reef.

Mrs STUCKEY: I thank the minister for raising the question of the Barrier Reef, because it has been reported in a number of articles that scaremongering campaigns from the likes of green groups and the Labor Party have caused enormous angst and a fall in the number of online bookings. So I would ask the minister to say if she knows of any figures that Labor's scaremongering has caused on our reef visitation.

CHAIR: Before the minister answers, member for Currumbin, I believe that this is outside the minister's responsibility.

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer.

CHAIR: Are you happy to answer it?

Ms JONES: Absolutely happy to answer it. The honourable member is correct in the sense that having faith in our ability as Queenslanders and, indeed, Australians to manage and protect our greatest environmental icon, a World Heritage listed area, is absolutely crucial. When they read for three years that we had a state government in Queensland winding back every single protection that had been put in place to protect the Great Barrier Reef, of course there were implications for the tourism industry. So we know that—

Mrs STUCKEY: You ran a scare campaign.

CHAIR: Thank you. The minister is answering your question, member.

Ms JONES: It is not a scare campaign that UNESCO—

Mrs STUCKEY: That is what it says in here. I will table it.

CHAIR: Member for Currumbin, thank you.

Ms JONES: She can table it if she wants to. I do not mind. She can table anything. What we saw was UNESCO seriously considering listing the Great Barrier Reef as at risk. That is what they were going to do. So what did we see under the previous government? They attacked UNESCO. They attacked the reports and did nothing—nothing—to protect the Great Barrier Reef so we had security for the future so that the 60,000 people in the tourism industry who rely on those jobs and the \$6 billion that is generated from those jobs here in Queensland could be protected. So you could put your head in the sand, attack UNESCO, attack anyone who was saying that what the former government was doing was wrong or you could have a government that steps up to the plate, recognises our international responsibility and, more importantly, our responsibility to Queenslanders who rely on the Great Barrier Reef for their livelihoods.

We went to the election—and I have to say that this was something that was raised numerous times with me as I spoke to thousands of people in my local community. They wanted a government that they knew was going to protect the Great Barrier Reef and ensure that we had an action plan to stop it being listed by UNESCO. That is why we went to the election with a \$100 million commitment to do just that. That is why you see UNESCO saying in a letter that they wrote to the Queensland government—

I wish particularly to commend the Queensland government for the commitment it has made to enhancing the implementation of reef 20 and a long-term sustainable plan through judicious policymaking and additional funding.

They said in regard to the plans that were in place under the previous government—

We have studied the so-called reef plan 2013 to 2018, but we did not understand how the implementation of this plan could be reconciled with the continuation of threats such as sediment discharge, agricultural use of pesticides, urban and port development.

So there is a clear contrast here between a government that is committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and the tourism jobs that rely on the Great Barrier Reef and a former government which to this day remains in denial about the real risk that having that listing would have delivered to the tourism industry here.

In addition, I was very pleased recently to launch in Cairns with the Premier a new Great Barrier Reef campaign. The day after we got the very good news that UNESCO and the international community had recognised that there was now a new government in Queensland that was committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef, the Premier and I as the tourism minister understood that we had to capitalise on this, and that is exactly what we did. We enlisted a new digital campaign inviting global travellers to come to visit and experience the Great Barrier Reef firsthand. The campaign featured a series of videos, which were posted on social media, in six languages aimed at driving visitors to Queensland. This ran from 2 July until late August. I think at the latest count it has had more than three million views and we have had more than 89,000 individual entries as well. I do not know if anyone has had a chance to see it, but the first time I saw this campaign I got goosebumps; it was so beautiful. It was great that we acted swiftly. We have a worldwide campaign out there, as I said, in six different languages all about showcasing the very best that the Great Barrier Reef has to offer. I think we will see continued growth with regard to Great Barrier Reef tourism well into the future.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Minister. I refer again to the Destination Tourism Plans. I table a copy of an article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 28 March.

CHAIR: Is leave sought?

Mrs STUCKEY: I seek leave to table.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mrs STUCKEY: It is an article in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* of 28 March 2015 titled 'Tourism bosses claim government nightclub lockout laws to cripple Gold Coast's "night economy".' I ask the minister: have you had any representations from the industry about its concerns with Labor's proposed lockout laws and the impact that it would have on the tourism industry in Queensland?

CHAIR: Before you answer, again, Minister, this is outside of your portfolio area, I believe. It is up to you whether you—

Ms JONES: Yes, I am happy to answer it in the sense that, to be honest, the main issue that has been raised with me—and probably because it is outside my portfolio area—is more about TQ funding and the funding guarantee. But I take the honourable member's point that there are concerns about that. I think it is also fair to say that we went to the election with a very clear policy on 1 am lockouts. As all members of parliament and the committee would be aware, the Attorney-General is leading the Palaszczuk government's response to this issue. I am confident that, through this process, the Attorney-General will have wideranging and broad consultation which will include tourism stakeholders. So when it comes to the No. 1 issue that has been raised with me consistently by industry, it is about funding the funding guarantee—and also, of course, as you go up the coast, about reef protection.

Mrs STUCKEY: Thank you, Minister. I refer to page 4 of the SDS and the following statement in it—

Although there is only gradual and uneven improvement in global and domestic economy, good results in investment attraction over the last two years have resulted in the Target/Est. being increased for 2015-16.

Minister, can you outline why the new target is so low? Why did it double only from \$25 million to \$50 million when the result from 2014-15 was \$150 million—six times the target? Why is this target so low?

Ms JONES: I will make some opening comments and then Paul can go into more detail. As I said, we have seen a failure by the previous government to plan for growth for tourism. What I have secured already is additional funding to restore that funding. I expect that we will continue to see growth, but it is going to be, as the economy recovers across the whole economy, a slower burn but one where I think you are going to see an acceleration like this. This is also the view of Tourism and Events Queensland. For example, yesterday I joined the honourable member for Currumbin down at the Gold Coast for the announcement of Jupiters as the first major sponsor of the Commonwealth Games. Right there they are investing \$345 million to construct a new six-star hotel tower and completely refurbish the entire Jupiters complex on the Gold Coast. This, of course, is in addition to the investment by the Jewel development, which is an almost \$1 billion new capital works investment in regard to a new six-star hotel to be delivered on the Broadwater. So we are going to see an increase and I am working very closely with industry to do that. Did you want to add anything to that, Paul?

Mr Martyn: Yes, good morning, committee members. In terms of how we measure the success of the Tourism Investment Attraction Unit, the measurement of the additional capital attracted against the SDS is counted when a proponent receives assistance from the TIAU or our state development regional offices, which represent us in regional areas, and successfully secures capital for Queensland tourism investment projects. As was pointed out in 2014-15, the department worked with investors and project proponents who have invested or attracted investment in excess of \$147 million, and the minister has referred to those projects.

The nature of investment is often lumpy and with the work of the Tourism Investment Attraction Unit, one project may take many years to actually yield a result. The reason we have increased the target from \$25 million to \$50 million is to reflect that fact. Hopefully, we will exceed that target, but if we raise it artificially we would be setting an unnecessary high bar for ourselves. A project may fall outside that financial year. We may not achieve it. That would not reflect on the work of the unit or its commitment but just may be an issue of timing.

Mrs STUCKEY: I have to say that it is amazing, for the phenomenal results of this Tourism Investment Attraction Unit, which was set up under the LNP, that it does not even rate a mention in the SDS.

Ms JONES: It is in the SDS. You referred to it yourself in your question.

Mrs STUCKEY: I talked about tourism investment. I did not refer to that.

Ms JONES: But that is the unit that does it.

Mrs STUCKEY: It is.

Ms JONES: Yes.

Dr McVEIGH: Minister, I refer to your earlier answer to a question from the member for Currumbin in relation to tourism issues in terms of our reputation as a state. You elected in that answer to make reference to the Great Barrier Reef, which I certainly welcome. Can you confirm if you were a member of the former Labor government that, in fact, was planning to dump 38 million tonnes of dredge spoil on that Great Barrier Reef?

CHAIR: Minister, I believe that this is outside your—

Ms JONES: I think the question is interesting in the fact that you know exactly when I have served in parliament. So to ask me when I have served in parliament is a bit embarrassing, really.

Mrs STUCKEY: You are an embarrassment.

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Currumbin. I think that is inappropriate. I ask you to withdraw.

Mrs STUCKEY: I withdraw.

Ms JONES: You got through longer than I anticipated, honourable member for Currumbin.

Mrs STUCKEY: And so did you. You have to always have the last word

CHAIR: Order, thank you. We will allow the minister to answer the question asked by the member for Toowoomba South.

Ms JONES: Unlike those opposite, we take our protection of the Great Barrier Reef extremely seriously and we have, as part of our policy that we took to the election, included a whole new raft of policies that will protect it, including in regard to dealing with dredge spoil. So are we being tougher in regard to dredge spoil? Absolutely. Are we the only government that went to the last election in regard to putting money in towards protecting the reef? Yes, we are. Are we the only one with a framework to deliver that with a task force specifically set up with a minister responsible to ensure that we are protecting it for the future? Absolutely. I am happy—

Dr McVEIGH: Thank you, Minister—

Ms JONES:—any day of the week to compare our record of protecting the Great Barrier Reef.

Dr McVEIGH:—for confirming—

Ms JONES: You do not have to ask me what years I served in parliament. You know what years I served in parliament.

Dr McVEIGH: Minister, I will ask you the question that I deem appropriate.

Ms JONES: I was elected and then there was a guy called Campbell Newman, who no-one talks about anymore. He won that last election and then I won this election. So the idea that you have to sit in here and ask me when I served—

Dr McVEIGH: Mr Chair, I have a further question for the minister, having confirmed that she was a member—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Toowoomba South. This will be the last question from non-government members.

Dr McVEIGH: The minister, as I said, has made comment in relation to the Great Barrier Reef and I certainly welcome that comment. We are all quite interested in the Great Barrier Reef in this parliament, I am sure.

Ms JONES: You are not.

Dr McVEIGH: The reef is obviously adjacent to a whole range of regional communities important to tourism, important to agriculture and so forth. My questions are in relation to two communities, or to industries represented in those communities. I refer to the sugarcane industry and the grazing industry. Is the minister, given that she has raised issues to do with the environment in some of those communities in her earlier answer, aware of the best management practice program being conducted by Canegrowers Queensland and AgForce specifically in relation to dealing with reef issues in those communities? Is the minister aware of progress of those best management practices?

CHAIR: Minister, before you answer—

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer. Yes, I am aware of them. I think that the honourable Minister for Environment spoke about it in his estimates hearing and I do refer you to those comments. I am aware of them and I think there is also on the public record the extent of the success of those programs. But clearly—clearly—you heard me talk about the UNESCO comments before that there was still a concern that we were not going to be able to protect the reef to the level that we needed to, and we have.

Dr McVEIGH: Is the minister attacking our sugarcane industry and our grazing industry?

Ms JONES: No, I am not. No. You asked me am I aware of—

Dr McVEIGH: And suggesting that best management practice programs in those industries are not appropriate methods to address issues on the reef?

Ms JONES: What I said was I am aware of the programs and the honourable Minister for Environment, who is the responsible minister, has already made those commitments.

Dr McVEIGH: So the minister supports the sugarcane and grazing industries?

Ms JONES: Yes, of course I do.

Dr McVEIGH: Thank you.

Ms JONES: But what I can also say in terms of our plan for protecting the Great Barrier Reef versus your plan for protecting the Great Barrier Reef is that ours has not only been recognised by the public as being stronger and better but also recognised by the international community and, indeed, the federal government.

CHAIR: We will go on to a question from the member for Lytton.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 3 of the SDS, can you please outline how the government will be pursuing new or improved capacity on priority airline routes into Queensland?

Ms JONES: Thank you, honourable member. As I said from the outset, my priority for tourism is growing tourism and growing tourism jobs. As part of that we want to ensure that our Attracting Aviation Investment Fund is used to target our key markets and seize those opportunities. Last year we saw over 100 million Chinese travel overseas. For the first six months of this year the Chinese community took 62 million trips overseas. That is up 12 per cent on the first half of last year. The new Jetstar flight between Wuhan in China and the Gold Coast that I announced with the Premier in May—only a few months—as I said, after turning the sod on the new \$1 billion investment in the Jewel development, is the kind of opportunity that I am talking about. But targeting Asia is not just about targeting China. We also know that Japan continues to be a growing market. Recently I announced the new daily service between Tokyo and Brisbane and that took off on 1 August. We hope to inject an extra 108,000 travellers into Queensland each year and we expect that through these additional visitors to here that we will grow in the Queensland economy by \$64 million. Once again, that is great news for tourism and great news for Queensland jobs.

This demonstrates how airline access from key and emerging international markets is critical to the competitiveness of the Queensland tourism industry. We now have four international airports in Queensland, as you know: Cairns, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Townsville. It was recently announced that there would be flights directly from Townsville to Bali. I acknowledge the support of that from the member. It has now become our fourth international airport. It is a really good time to be talking about the growth in tourism in Townsville. Hey, we should go there in October and talk about tourism!

These airports service Queensland by providing four million seats directly into our state from international markets. These tourists then flow throughout the state. Our Tourism and Events Queensland marketing and the work that we do with the airlines and the aviation fund is all about seeing how we can work with them to actually encourage people when they arrive here to then travel to other destinations across Queensland so that we are sharing the opportunity with some of the communities that have been raised here by members of the committee.

During the election campaign this government committed \$10 million over three years to boost the aviation attraction fund. We believe this fund is critical to drawing those new airlines and new expanded routes into Queensland. This fund has been used to secure Jetstar's new twice weekly service between Wuhan in China and the Gold Coast, which I mentioned, a new service between Vancouver and Brisbane operated by Air Canada and Hong Kong Airlines' new seasonal service between Hong Kong and the Gold Coast and then up to Cairns. That is a really great announcement not only for the Gold Coast but also for Cairns, as a premier tourism location. We know, as I said earlier in my opening address, that there are a thousand new jobs for every million dollars spent in tourism.

Ms PEASE: Minister, what is the economic benefit to Queensland?

Ms JONES: In regards to the aviation fund?

Ms PEASE: Yes.

Ms JONES: As I said, in 2015-16, members of the committee will note that I have introduced hard targets. Before we were talking about targets in the SDS of 150,000 additional seats on new routes as a new service standard measure. This is a target set to be delivered this financial year. It is one that I am very keen as the minister to drive. That is because, as I said, we know the impact of direct aviation tourism—the opportunity to get people to come straight to Queensland. All the data shows that if they fly directly from overseas into Queensland as opposed to Sydney or Melbourne that they are more likely to have a secondary trip here in Queensland and spread that money to those other regional communities.

For example, in North Queensland the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund has been used to secure three new routes, which I have not talked about yet. These are new ones for the committee: China Eastern's seasonal service between Shanghai and Cairns—the service commenced in October and operates during the Chinese New Year in the northern winter periods; SilkAir's three times weekly service between Singapore and Cairns, which commenced on 30 May; and Hong Kong Airline's new seasonal service, as I said, between Hong Kong, the Gold Coast and Cairns, which is expected to commence in January 2016. It is estimated the China Eastern and SilkAir secured routes for North Queensland will result—and this is the data around the targets—in a net increase of approximately 47,000 international visitors per annum, overnight visitor expenditure of up to approximately \$90 million

per year and up to around—this is the one I know the honourable members of the committee will be most interested in—270 new direct jobs supported. The aviation attraction fund is something that we recognise as being good policy. That is why we went to the election to boost it. I really look forward to, over the next three years, continuing to announce new flights into Queensland that will secure these additional jobs.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to page 35 of the SDS, can you please outline support for destination and event marketing in the outback?

Ms JONES: Yes, thank you. We have spoken a little bit about the outback this morning. I know that the member for Toowoomba South has also spoken about some of the well-known western outback events. We support Outback Queensland through marketing activity provided by Tourism and Events Queensland. Predominantly we have been targeting the domestic market and the New Zealand market because we know they are the ones where we are most likely to get traction and to get growth. Events that we support as part of outback tourism do include the Birdsville Races, the Julia Creek Dirt and Dust Festival and the Mount Isa Mines Rotary Rodeo, which I know that the Premier attended, as well as continued support for the Outback Education Tour program and experience development initiatives.

I had the great privilege in May this year, with the Premier, to go to the outback and announce our new outback tourism campaign. This new platform, which is a major tourism campaign, is called Live Australia's Story. We committed a record investment in outback tourism campaigning that has ever been delivered in Queensland—more than half a million dollars towards the brand development and destination marketing campaign. More than 100 industry representatives and locals joined with the Premier and I for this launch, with some travelling up to a thousand kilometres to be there. I recently spoke to Alan Smith from the outback tourism organisation who said to me that they had never before had a Premier and tourism minister go to the outback to announce outback tourism. So, it is the first time they have ever seen those two ministers together in the outback talking about the growth in outback tourism. I hope that does genuinely help erase some concerns—and I am happy to talk to the honourable member for Toowoomba South—in the future that we are very committed to growing those events in regional Queensland and want to continue to do that. We understand that this is the lifeblood for a lot of communities where they have experienced a downturn and they see tourism as an opportunity to grow jobs and support their economies.

Phase 1 of the campaign, which ran until 30 June, has resulted in over 26,000 visits to the website. We are working on trying to encourage, through this campaign, people to come also at the end of the year and also next year as well. Overwhelmingly, and I know that Leanne was there as well, it was a wonderful event. There was overwhelming support and real uplift in the community about that. In actual fact, that is what I was trying to say: Alan Smith was saying that people are still talking about the fact that they felt so valued and that the government recognises that during these hard times we are putting our money where our mouth is to grow tourism jobs in outback Queensland.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to page 33 of the SDS, can you outline the benefits of major event funding in Queensland?

Ms JONES: Yes. A lot of the conversation that has been had this morning has been talking about tourism and destination marketing but, of course, one of the key elements to grow tourism and tourism jobs in Queensland is to invest in major events. Major events are a key element of our strategic tourism investment and we know are a significant driver of visitors to Queensland. Distinctive destination focused events are sustainable high-value assets for the state. I just talked about a number of the ones that are clearly identified with the outback and build the theme of the outback which is Live Australia's Story. Not only is it about attracting high yielding events to Queensland, but also having ones that fit with our story and will actually lead to growing our destination marketing and communication with both domestic travellers and international travellers about what is so great about coming to Queensland. I always get a bit excited when we talk about this because I am a fifth generation Queenslander and I am very proud of everything that we have to offer.

Many tourism industry stakeholders have raised with me the importance of major events to their destination. This government, as I said, and you know, has committed to a four-year funding guarantee. I think it was important that I got Leanne's comments on the record in that regard because Leanne is the one who has to negotiate with the major players in regards to getting those major events here. The four-year funding guarantee for major events ensures that Queensland's destination events can be showcased to Australia and the world and that we recognise the importance that they have to tourism jobs.

Since I became the Minister for Tourism, TEQ has secured a number of new events that will deliver future benefits for Queensland. We actually anticipate that now that we—I know I keep talking about it—have the funding guarantee going forward we will be able to attract even more events because the dollars of committed funding to the ratio of new funding will change which means that there will be more money for Tourism and Events Queensland to—I cannot talk about that yet; I do not want to break commercial in confidence. But there are huge opportunities there. So, World Science Festival Australia 2016-18, the Medieval Power that I talked about, the ITU World Triathlon Series grand final and the age group world championships in 2018 and the World Bowls Championships in 2020. I can keep going, but we might move on to something else—Brisbane Racing Carnival, Great River Masters.

Mr SAUNDERS: You just outlined the World Science Festival. Can you outline the economic benefit that that will have for us in 2016?

Ms JONES: Yes. I am very excited about this. On 1 May I was very pleased to announce with the Premier that Brisbane will become the second city in the world to host the World Science Festival, with New York being the founding city. There you go—Brisbane and New York. The first World Science Festival will be held next year in Brisbane in March 2016. It is an exclusive six-year agreement. The World Science Festival Brisbane will feature local scientists and performers from around Australia, New Zealand, South-East Asia, as well as the best and brightest that have previously been at the event in New York. The inaugural World Science Festival Brisbane will take science out of the laboratory and into the streets, parks, museums, galleries and performing arts venues of Brisbane and regional Queensland. I really think that hosting the only World Science Festival in the southern hemisphere is a significant coup for the tourism industry in Queensland. I am just going to mention, if you do not mind, with the indulgence of the committee, that on the weekend I went to Robotronica at QUT where they had up to 20,000 people for one day to talk about robots. I was there with my son playing with Lego robots.

Exclusive events such as this are a real drawcard for visitors, with the 2016 World Science Festival expecting to result in more than 27,000 direct visitor nights. As we know, every visitor night creates more jobs and grows the tourism industry here. But I think what is critical and why we as a government are very proud that we have been able to secure this for the first time outside of New York is because it really does, not only from a tourism perspective reinforce our reputation as a premier event destination, which helps tourism grow, but also because we want to send a very clear message through our Advance Queensland policy that we are all about future jobs and diversifying our economy and we know that through science and innovation that we will be able to create new jobs here in Queensland that will give our young people the certainty and the confidence to stay in Queensland and pursue a new career here. I am very excited about being at the science festival. Given we have the six-year security of the event—and we were talking about with events that you have your inaugural event—we can look at ways each year to grow that event and make it bigger. We hope that we can do that with the certainty that funding provides to give us a six-year contract, which means that I think it will be bigger than Ben Hur.

CHAIR: We have one last question for this round. We only have around about a minute left. I call the member for Currumbin.

Mrs STUCKEY: Question on notice No. 17 refers to the Attracting Aviation Investment Fund. The LNP established this fund, together with a comprehensive aviation blueprint to 2016, one that aligned with Tourism Australia's 2020 visitor expenditure targets. What tourism targets has Labor set, apart from a new measure to count airline seats?

Ms JONES: Tourism generally or tourism just for AAIF?

Mrs STUCKEY: To align with the 2020 target that we had with Tourism Australia and part of the aviation blueprint?

Ms JONES: I have already said on the public record that we are keeping the targets in the 2020 report.

Mrs STUCKEY: To double overnight visitor expenditure?

Ms JONES: In my answer before I talked about the target in regards to growing it. Also, just to correct the record, while you set up AAIF, as you well know there was already a program in place under the previous government through the Queensland Investment Trust to actually deliver airlines here. Are we committed to growing AAIF more than the previous government? Yes. That is why you had an \$8 million commitment over three years and we have a \$10 million commitment over three years. We are putting more money in because we recognise that we will be able to deliver higher—

Mrs STUCKEY: That was not my question, Minister.

CHAIR: Order! Thank you, Minister. You have responded to the question. We are out of time—

Mrs STUCKEY: She has not responded. She has no targets for tourism—

Ms JONES: The DestinationQ targets we are keeping. What we will not do is put out an aspirational target.

CHAIR: Order! We are out of time. The committee will now adjourn for a break and the hearing will resume at 11 am with the examination of the estimates for the portfolio areas of Small Business and the Commonwealth Games.

Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am 11.00 am

 **CHAIR:** Welcome, Minister and officials. I also welcome the member for Clayfield who is joining us. The committee will now examine the portfolio area of Small Business until 11.45. I ask the minister to make a brief opening statement.

Ms JONES: I thank the committee for the opportunity to make a statement. We know that in Queensland there are more than 405,000 small businesses that account for 97 per cent of all businesses and provide nearly half of all private sector jobs. Since the Palaszczuk government was elected, more than 20,000 jobs have been created and small businesses have played a significant role in positive employment growth. Our government is committed to working with business to promote jobs, growth and investment, and already it is yielding dividends for Queensland. What is clear is that our positive economic agenda is restoring the business confidence that was lost under the former government.

Our first state budget cemented a strong platform for this growth in business confidence. We delivered a responsible and measured budget that included a \$1.2 billion surplus. When business has the confidence to make new investments, take on more staff and expand their operations, our economy grows. The last few months have seen survey after survey confirm that Queensland business confidence is on the rise. The NBA monthly business survey for July shows Queensland business confidence is now the highest of all the mainland states. The CCIQ survey of business conditions for the June quarter says business sentiment in Queensland has improved on the back of a balanced state budget and improving business conditions. Queensland consumer confidence has also risen to the highest level in almost two years, according to the Westpac Melbourne Institute Consumer Sentiment Index released earlier this month. According to the Sensis Business Index released today, Queensland small and medium enterprises are rising in confidence. Confidence in this sector was up eight points in June, hitting its highest level since August 2014. The Sensis survey also reports an increase in business support for our government's policies.

We made a commitment to listen to Queenslanders and that is no different when it comes to our small business community. From my first week as small business minister until today, I have continued to meet with hundreds of small business owners and managers across the state to ensure that I am listening firsthand to what is important to them. Last week, I convened the first meeting of the Small Business Advisory Council and the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council in response to small business concerns. I have increased the number of small business representatives on the Small Business Advisory Council. I want to ensure small business has a direct line of communication with me so that I hear firsthand the issues that matter to them. Our efforts to grow the economy, boost confidence and create jobs are all helping to create a positive future for small business here in Queensland.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: Thank you, Mr Chair. I have noted the minister's opening statement and some of her comments. Minister, I refer to your comments in your opening statement in relation to business confidence. Is it not the case that the latest Sensis small business report shows net confidence in Queensland is the lowest in the nation and that support among small business for government policy is at negative 22 compared to plus 16 in December 2014, which shows that your government does not have a plan for small business, is not engaging with small business and, in fact, does not have the support of small business in its policies?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question because he has been the shadow minister for small business for six months and he has not written to me once, he has not spoken to me about small business once, he has not raised a question in parliament about small business and, indeed, I cannot find any record where he has spoken about small business in relation to this. In the March to June 2015 Sensis Business Index—

Mr NICHOLLS: We are talking about confidence in the report, Mr Chairman, not about what I may or may not have done, as much as it is of interest to the minister, of course.

CHAIR: Order, member for Clayfield! I think the minister is still answering that question.

Ms JONES: We have seen consistently an increase in business confidence since the election of this government. As I said in my opening remarks, the March to June Sensis Business—

Mr NICHOLLS: Was it not the case that confidence plummeted to the lowest level after the election of your government?

Ms JONES: What we have seen is the restoration of that. I am very pleased that you have shown an interest in small business for the first time in the past six months, honourable member for Clayfield. I say this to you—

Mr NICHOLLS: I show continuing interest in small business all the time. That is why we did things like increase the payroll tax threshold, which you stopped doing.

CHAIR: Order! Thank you, member for Clayfield.

Ms JONES: And we have increased the payroll tax rebate, as you would have seen in the budget. Let us talk about what small business has said to me about the previous government—

Mr NICHOLLS: At a net loss to business of \$25 million, year in year out.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, I ask you to stop interjecting. The minister is trying to answer your question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chair, if the minister is provoking a response, she has to expect that she will get a reply.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, the minister is answering the question that you asked, so I ask you to cease interjecting and allow the minister to continue.

Mr NICHOLLS: Perhaps I can give some guidance because my question was: with support for government policies at negative 22 compared to plus 16 under the LNP government—

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Clayfield. I am sure the minister is answering your question. I ask you to allow the minister to take time to answer that question. Minister, I invite you to continue your response.

Ms JONES: In regard to the Sensis survey, the Queensland business community is more confident in the state's economic future than they were three months ago. As I was saying, as with the Sensis business survey, what we are continuing to see is a restoration of faith in growth in the economy. That faith was lost by the previous government, which went to an election in 2012 assuring everybody that their jobs were safe, only to go ahead and sack thousands of people. I raise this—

Mr NICHOLLS: Hold on. Mr Chairman, it is difficult to see that the minister's response is, in fact, indicative of small business.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, what is your point of order?

Mr NICHOLLS: How many jobs in small business she might want to talk about, not go off on a tangent somewhere else.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, what is your point of order?

Ms JONES: Can I please answer that? I would really like to answer.

Mr NICHOLLS: My point of order is relevance to the question. I am happy to table the report from Sensis this morning that shows support for Queensland government policies at minus 22 at the current quarter versus the December quarter support for Queensland government policies at positive 16.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: Is that not indicative of a government that does not have a policy for small business?

CHAIR: Order, member for Clayfield! The minister may answer the question in whichever way she sees proper.

Ms JONES: There are two things. First, I commented on the fact that the report that was released today shows that the Queensland business community is more confident in the state's economic future than they were three months ago. I reiterate my point that what we are seeing is a restoration of faith

under this government. What I would really like to answer is the assertion—which actually highlights exactly where they got it wrong—by the honourable former treasurer of Queensland that the sacking of thousands of people—thousands of people—did not—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, there is no question in relation to that. She is claiming an assertion. If she has answered the question, I am happy to move on to the next question.

Ms JONES: No, can I please—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to move on.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have a limited amount of time, Mr Chairman.

Ms JONES: The member for Clayfield said that he did not see the relevance between the loss of jobs and business.

CHAIR: Order!

Dr McVEIGH: Can I say something?

CHAIR: Just one moment, thank you, member for Toowoomba South. Member for Clayfield, you have asked the question; Minister, you are answering the question. I ask you to keep it relevant and quick. We have a very short time.

Ms JONES: I will be very quick. It is relevant because he said in his preamble to that question that he did not see the link between the loss of Public Service jobs and small business.

Mr NICHOLLS: No, I did not say that at all.

Ms JONES: I would like to read a letter from a small business owner that directly relates to that. It was to the member for Springwood.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chair, point of order. What we have here—

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Member for Clayfield, what is your point of order?

Mr NICHOLLS: The minister is misleading the committee.

CHAIR: Under which standing order?

Mr NICHOLLS: Misleading the committee is a matter that can be raised by any member. She is saying I made an assertion in relation to jobs and so on. I merely directed the minister—

Ms JONES: I refer you to the record.

CHAIR: One moment.

Mr NICHOLLS: I merely directed the minister to the position of the state government—that is, support for government policies by small business is now at minus 22 compared to plus 16 in December 2014. I did not make any other assertions, as the minister is claiming.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, I ask you to get to your point of order.

Mr NICHOLLS: The minister is putting words in my mouth and I think that is something that you, as chairman of the committee, ought to be in charge of—that is, she cannot, effectively, verbal me in terms of things I said and the record will show that.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Clayfield. Minister, I ask you to finish your answer.

Ms JONES: I will answer that in two ways, if possible. I refer to the report that you talked about before you went to a comment that said you saw no link between the loss of jobs and small business. I will answer it in two ways. The Sensis Business Index that was released today revealed an eight-point jump in confidence for Queensland small and medium sized businesses since the last survey following the election and change of government. It also says that the growth in this Sensis survey is mirrored in other recent reports, which I articulated in my opening address, on the state's economy, which showed a sunnier outlook. What we have seen here today is a member of parliament who is continuing to talk down the Queensland economy. I think it is very enlightening for all of us that we have a shadow—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am satisfied with the answer, Mr Chairman. Given we have only a limited amount of time, I think we can move on to the next question.

Ms JONES: I am happy to table media reports about the Sensis report that you referred to, which articulates clearly that there has been growth.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have all read them. I seek leave to table those two reports, which I mentioned earlier.

Ms JONES: We are in furious agreement.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. Member for Clayfield, please ask your second question.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, the minister mentioned the Small Business Advisory Council, which met for the first time last Thursday. I note that some considerable time afterwards there was, in fact, a photograph posted on Twitter. I ask the minister if she could name the members respectively of the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council and the Small Business Advisory Council? Why, it seems, has there been no public announcement of the names of those people and why, it seems, was the meeting of those two bodies convened together in what would seem to be a rushed attempt to get the meeting in before estimates? I seek leave to table a copy of the photograph.

Ms JONES: I am very pleased that the honourable member is looking at my Twitter account and that he is up to date with the fact that, as the new Minister for Small Business in Queensland, I am very proud that we have delivered on our election commitment to establish the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council. In addition to that, we made a commitment that we would have the small business council here in Queensland—

Mr NICHOLLS: The one we started.

Ms JONES:—as part of what we have delivered on, which I am very proud of, because there were some concerns in the small business community that the former government did not understand the impact of their policies on small business. We expanded the small business council to increase the actual—

Mr NICHOLLS: Who made that statement?

Ms JONES:—representation of small business owners on the small business council.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, a statement was made that small business was concerned that the former government did not understand the impact of their policies.

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, what is your point of order?

Mr NICHOLLS: I will let it go, Mr Chairman.

Ms JONES: I think he is referring to my comment that the feedback I received from small business is that the former government did not understand the impact of their policy decisions on small business. That takes me to a letter that I have here from a local business owner in the Springwood electorate. He wrote to his local member articulating his genuine concerns that people were not spending because they did not have confidence that they had a job. It is really critical for people, in order to part with money from their back pocket at a local small business, to know that money will be put back into their pocket the following week. I can say with absolute confidence to the honourable member for Clayfield that as I doorknocked many of the small businesses in my local community—

Mr NICHOLLS: It was very a very specific question. We have not seen a media announcement. It has been six months since it was announced.

Ms JONES: Ms Jemina Dunn, the Queensland State Director, Ai Group, who is on the Small Business Council; Ms Kimberly James, owner of Kings Fishery, Caboolture; Mr Tony Axford, Chair and CEO of Gold Coast Business Enterprise Centre, Gold Coast; Mr Ralph Edwards, Director, Bright Eyes Sunglasses, Brisbane; Ms Saba Abraham, Director, Mu'ooz Eritrean restaurant, Brisbane; Ms Sonya Jeffrey, Managing Director, Ingan Tours, Tully; Mr Nick Behrens, Director, Advocacy and Workplace Relations, CCIQ, Brisbane; Mr Derek Lightfoot, Managing Director, Tropical Pines, Yeppoon; Ms Kathleen Garner, Director, AusMumpreneur—which I will have the pleasure of talking about in the near future—Innisfail; Mr Stuart Puller, Principal, Mortgage Choice, Brisbane.

With regard to the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council, the council membership comprises of Mr Stephen Tait, Chamber of Commerce & Industry Queensland; Ms Jemina Dunn, Australian Industry Group; Mr Craig Fenton, PricewaterhouseCoopers; Ms Danielle Duell, People with Purpose; Ms Courtney Petersen, Shine Lawyers; Mr Grant Field, MGI, South Queensland; Ms Elena Grosse, Australian Innovative Systems; Ms Tina Chu, Acchoir Group. I can keep going if you want me to. They are the members.

Mr NICHOLLS: We have not seen a media release. If you want to answer them on notice, I am happy with that.

Ms JONES: I have just read them all. You asked me for the list; there are the names. I do not know what the honourable member—

Mr NICHOLLS: Sorry, I thought you said you could keep going with the list of names.

Ms JONES: I can keep going talking about what they do if that is what you are interested in, but it does not appear to be a genuine concern.

Mr NICHOLLS: Perhaps I might ask that.

CHAIR: Minister, have you finished answering the question? Thank you.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can the minister advise in the process of working closely with industry what feedback she has received regarding business confidence?

Ms JONES: I am very proud to be part of a government that is committed to working in consultation with Queensland. The day after I was sworn in as the Minister for Small Business I joined with the Premier to meet with business and industry stakeholders including the Cairns Chamber of Commerce, Capricorn Enterprise and Queensland Australian Industry Group. At the forum the Premier delivered one clear message: our doors are open. We are committed to working with business to grow jobs, to give back that confidence to the small business sector and the business community that was lost under the LNP.

The honourable member for Maryborough has 25 years experience as a small business owner and may be interested to know that I have received representations from CCIQ regarding Queensland Small Business Week. In May, CCIQ contacted me and confirmed that they believe that Small Business Week, which commenced in 2013, should continue, and I am very pleased to advise the committee today—

Mr NICHOLLS: Another good LNP initiative, Minister!

Ms JONES: And I am very pleased. We said during the election that we would keep Small Business Week, but I wanted to listen to industry—

Mr NICHOLLS: And the advisory council.

Ms JONES: Which we have expanded to include genuine representation, the voice of small business owners. I am happy to talk this through with regard to a local business owner—I am taking the interjection from the member—and what he said to his local member with regard to the confidence that he lost, as a small business owner, under the previous government. He said –

As a small business owner in the picture framing industry, it became very apparent that, during the time of the previous government many of my customers were in fear of losing their jobs or indeed had actually lost their jobs. This affected both individuals and married couples with mortgages to pay and, as such, many of them were worried that they would lose their homes and they had little confidence in finding work in their chosen profession. The flow-on effect for my small business was people stopped spending on what is considered non-essential items, and there were periods where business was quieter than it had been for more than four years.

I see members of the committee nodding. They, like me, have heard this story hundreds and hundreds of times, from every small business in our local community who felt that, particularly in communities like mine where we have a really high representation of public servants. It takes time for people to regain confidence, but I am hoping the new government—

Mr Nicholls interjected.

CHAIR: Order! The member will cease interjecting.

Mr NICHOLLS: You know I was being provoked. You cannot do it both ways.

Ms JONES: It is very concerning to me that an honourable member would accuse me of provoking the committee by simply reading into *Hansard* what small business owners have been saying to members of parliament and were—

Mr NICHOLLS: The minister is indulging in the usual verballing.

Ms JONES: It is not verballing; I am quoting directly from a letter, which I am happy to table for honourable members.

Mr NICHOLLS: The point of order is that the committee is an inquiry into the expenditure and the operations of the department.

Ms JONES: And you did not ask me one question about that.

Mr NICHOLLS: It is the opportunity for the parliamentarians to hold the executive to account. If it is to be a debating chamber and if the minister is going to make and throw assertions forward, then that changes the nature of the committee meeting and it is no longer an inquiry; it then becomes a debate. It is patently not the role of the committee to engage in that unless the minister wants to do so, in which case we can do it.

CHAIR: Thank you, member for Clayfield. I will allow the minister to continue.

Ms JONES: I think it is a matter of public record that I was responding to an interjection from the member. If the honourable member wants to desist in interjecting then I will desist in debating him. I think what is really clear from the experience and feedback I have received as the small business minister in Queensland now and what I experienced all through the election is that small business lost confidence in Queensland. Members of this committee are well aware that we saw unemployment rise significantly under the previous government. That happened because of a direct policy of that government to cut jobs. When you cut jobs you cut confidence. When people do not know—

Mr NICHOLLS: Here we go again in terms of provoking a response when we know, for example, that the CCIQ Pulse survey in May showed that business confidence and conditions were the lowest in a decade. We can go backwards and forwards with this or we can answer the questions on expenditure.

CHAIR: Thank you. I just remind everyone that, tempting as it may be, under standing order 118 this is not for debate. This is where we answer questions asked of us. Minister, do you have anything further?

Ms JONES: No, I think I have articulated my position very clearly: if you cut people's jobs they lose confidence in spending, and they have done that with small business.

Mr NICHOLLS: There is another cheap shot at the end of it.

Ms JONES: It is fact.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you outline the Palaszczuk government's policy focus areas to boost employment, particularly for small business in Queensland?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, I know that he has been a small business owner for over 25 years so he understands firsthand the requirement and need for this. The 2015-16 budget is a job creation budget, and through our employment budget paper *Jobs now, jobs for the future* we have clearly articulated the Palaszczuk government's approach to improving employment outcomes for Queensland and the stark contrast to the previous government.

The Palaszczuk government recognises the variety of policy channels open to government to improve employment outcomes for Queenslanders. Specifically, the budget recognises that enhancing the operating environment for Queensland businesses will mean more jobs. Confidence equals jobs, and we know, for example, that recoveries in employment in Europe and North America following the GFC were led by small and medium enterprise.

We recognise and understand that small business has a crucial role to play. This is because small business can be key drivers of employment. If just one out of every 10 small businesses hired one extra person, that would mean an additional 40,000 new jobs. Already, these businesses employ around a million Queenslanders. That is why this budget includes a range of measures designed for growth and for small business. This benefits business in numerous ways.

The government is also working to reduce cost for business, cutting red tape—which we have talked about—and unnecessary regulation, ensuring state taxes are competitive and reducing barriers to investment. These are some of the key things I will be working with at both the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council and the Small Business Advisory Council. The government's Working Queensland package includes several key initiatives to this end including the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council. I will also be working closely with the Queensland Productivity Commission. All of you would be well aware of the Advance Queensland package announced by the Premier, a \$180 million investment in innovation, skills, education and growing those businesses for the future.

Of course, when talking about small and micro businesses, there are new grants programs to help those businesses grow. That includes a \$50 million Best and Brightest Fund which will develop, attract and retain some of our best talent here in Queensland so they are creating those jobs and those business here in our state. There is also the \$46 million Advance Queensland Future Jobs Strategy, which will open the door to new industry research collaborations and tackle the big innovation challenges.

I can advise the committee in relation to the joint committee of the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council and the Small Business Advisory Council. The first meeting was a joint meeting because I wanted to ensure that we both were working to achieve the same goals and that there was not duplication between those two committees. For the benefit of the committee, the overwhelming feedback from those committees was that they welcome the opportunity to come together as a group. The overwhelming view was that they believed that having them together was a really good way for us to understand the positive things we can do to grow business or to complement the work we are doing with regard to the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council. It is very exciting news to advance Queensland, and I look forward with Minister Enoch to delivering those and to creating new opportunities for jobs and growth, particularly in the micro and small business area.

Mr NICHOLLS: Minister, your website outlines the Small Business Advisory Council's terms and conditions and is currently announcing that current council members are to be advised. Now that you have announced that you might want to update that. That was a screen shot as of last night, I believe. Can you advise if you have tasked the council with looking at proposed government policies such as the impact of changes to the workers compensation scheme or the 1 am lockout or, indeed, any other aspect you may have tasked the Small Business Advisory Council to look at?

CHAIR: Member for Clayfield, can you explain how your question is relevant to our consideration of the budget estimates?

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer any questions.

Mr NICHOLLS: I refer to SDS page 5, the Small Business Advisory Council. I have asked what it has been tasked to do.

Ms JONES: As I said, last week I chaired a joint meeting with members of these councils and the round-table discussions on challenges facing small businesses and priorities for the red-tape-reduction platform. I actually started by saying—which we committed to at the election—that I would listen to their concerns and talk about what they thought we should prioritise in the term of government to ensure we were in agreement about the work plan going forward. I did not arrogantly go in there and say, 'You must do this, this and this.' I said, 'Let's sit down. Let's go through in broad discussion about what you think as small business, as business industry, are the things you would like me to work with you to achieve this term.' Overwhelmingly, they were very pleased with this approach because they felt genuinely listened to. I encourage the honourable member to talk to Stephen Tait—

Mr NICHOLLS: Oh, I do.

Ms JONES: I know you do.

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, my question was: has the minister tasked the council with anything?

Ms JONES: The member can talk to him specifically about this. In answering that question, they made several important points which will be the focus going forward. They said that mentoring was one key issue they wanted looked at. They also talked about the total small business life cycle to ensure government works with small business throughout their growth. For example, we know that the statistics are not great in Queensland and indeed across Australia with regard to small businesses that start and then stay. We see a quite significant loss of small businesses that fall over in the first five years. They want the advisory council to advise government about how we can support small business and growth. They thought there was a real role for government to work with business throughout their life cycle, so as they grow—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, I might just request that the minister be brought back to the question, which was: has the minister tasked the Small Business Advisory Council to respond? The terms of reference are quite clear. I could have asked 'bring to the attention of the minister systemic and emerging issues with the potential to affect the ability of business', but I did not. I asked whether she has in fact tasked them to undertake any of the issues and to provide detail. I have other questions that I would like answered.

Ms JONES: But I want to answer the question. You have asked me to answer the question. I will answer the question.

CHAIR: If I can make a ruling on that, the minister may answer questions in whatever way she sees proper, although I do remind the minister that she would assist the committee by staying relevant to the question.

Ms JONES: Yes, I am. The question was: what did I task them with? I tasked them with saying, 'I want to work with small business to grow jobs in Queensland.' We got elected on a platform about growing jobs and I am answering that question very clearly here, not with words that I am making up but with words from industry—what they told me at that forum that they want government to do. So I could sit here—

Mr NICHOLLS: We have an answer, that she has not asked them to do anything—

Ms JONES: Yes, I have.

Mr NICHOLLS:—except to talk to her. So I would like to move on to the next question, if I could.

Ms JONES: No. Can I please answer that? That is wrong. I ask you to withdraw. What I said very clearly was that the No. 1 priority for me—and by 'me' I mean the government—is to work with small business and the red-tape reduction council to grow jobs in Queensland, and that is exactly what I have tasked them to do. In response to that—

Mr NICHOLLS: I appreciate the point the minister has made and it has taken her six months to get there. So now my next question is—

Ms JONES: I refer you to my published diaries.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of the red tape advisory council, if I can move on—I refer to page 5 of the SDS: establish a Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council—will the minister provide us with what, if any, target there is for the reduction of red tape and what, if any, progress has been made in achieving that reduction of red tape?

Ms JONES: Once again I really do welcome the opportunity to talk about the red-tape reduction council because what—

Mr NICHOLLS: My question was very specific. It was not to talk about the red-tape reduction council. It was about whether there is a target for government to achieve it and what has been done in terms of achieving that target.

Ms JONES: Okay and I would really like to answer the question uninterrupted. We have been here all of this time and he has interjected on every single answer. I welcome robust debate and I am happy to have that with him at any time but, as he rightly pointed out—

CHAIR: We are not here to debate, thank you, Minister.

Ms JONES:—he said that this was about the SDS and I want to answer the question. What I heard loud and clear from the red-tape reduction council is that they want to work through real-life examples of how red tape interacts with business. The contrast here is really critical. The red-tape council, which I chair and which listen to industry, talked about the fact that they want to have real-life examples of how the regulatory burden from all levels of government works together to compound for businesses. So absolutely the key target is to reduce red tape and regulation here in Queensland. What we will not do, and I heard this very loud and clear—

Mr NICHOLLS: By how much?

Ms JONES: Well we are working that out. That is why we had the meeting to discuss that. What I want to say is that you had a target—

Mr NICHOLLS: By how much?

Ms JONES: Can I please answer this?

CHAIR: Order, please. Allow the minister to answer the question.

Ms JONES: The previous government had a target of 20 per cent which they failed to meet. I am not going to repeat a situation where you just put a target out there, do not talk to industry about it and have no plan or genuine commitment to meeting it. So what we saw under the former government's red-tape council—

Mr NICHOLLS: So is it the case that your answer is that you have no target?

CHAIR: Order, member for Clayfield. I ask you not to interject while the minister is still answering the question.

Ms JONES: Thank you. No. What I am saying is that we had our meeting where we discussed what the target should be. What they said to me very clearly, member for Clayfield, is that they were not interested in an arbitrary target set by government that had no relevance to industry. In actual fact, they told me—

Mr NICHOLLS: So did they say they wanted more regulation?

Ms JONES: They said they felt locked out by the process. Let me talk about why they do not want a 20 per cent target that means nothing to real-life business on the ground. You can pretend—well you are—that you are refusing to listen to what they actually said to me. I am here to tell you what they said because I want to work with them. What we saw under the former government was a red-tape reduction target—

Mr NICHOLLS: What are you achieving? Working with them and achieving are two separate things.

Ms JONES:—which saw public servants spending their time actually counting the pages of legislation and counting the requirements for every 'should', 'can', 'will', 'will not', 'cannot', 'should not' and various other words in legislation. That is right, member for Maryborough; it is comical.

Mr NICHOLLS: So you do not think you should have a base measure. You think you should make up a number and not count it.

Ms JONES: They had public servants sitting in a backroom counting these words and counting pages of legislation. What I can tell the member for Clayfield is that at the red-tape reduction council meetings and indeed—I refer him to my diaries—all of the meetings I have had with business since I became the minister and of all of the businesses I met with during the election campaign—and I am sure you are all the same; I am sure you are the same—not one person said to me, 'Minister, what we really want in order to reduce red tape is a whole bunch of public servants sitting in a room counting the words 'will', 'will not', 'cannot', 'should not' and various other things.'

Mr NICHOLLS: What they said was we wanted to get rid of Kate Jones's waste tax. What they said was we wanted to get rid of the green tape that was put in place.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms JONES: There were actually 47 pages of guidelines teaching public servants how to interpret what is red tape. Has anyone from CCIQ, AIG—everyone you claim to listen to—ever said to me—

Mr NICHOLLS: What does CCIQ say about the target?

Ms JONES:—'Keep the previous government's red-tape target which was based on a public servant sitting in a backroom counting words and pages of legislation'? No, not one.

Mr NICHOLLS: The CCIQ said it. They love a target.

Ms JONES: I have tried to explain throughout this whole process—

Mr NICHOLLS: That you have no target.

Ms JONES:—what business has been saying to me. What they are saying very clearly is that having 47 pages of guidelines sitting—

Mr Boothman interjected.

Ms JONES: Yes, I am happy to go there.

CHAIR: Order! I ask members to cease interjecting. The minister is trying to answer the question and needs to do so without interruption. Minister, can I ask you to move through the answer quickly?

Ms JONES: The reason there is not a target is that the red-tape reduction council said to me that that is not what they want. What they want is real-life examples of how business interacts with government, what that looks like for individual sectors of the community and when you look at it cumulatively from the different levels of government how we can change that. That is what they have said. They did not say to me, 'Please keep—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, I do not think we have an answer.

Ms JONES: I just answered it. I said—

Opposition members interjected.

CHAIR: Order! I have asked for interjections to cease. If you continue, I will invoke the standing orders.

Mr NICHOLLS: Sorry, Mr Chairman.

Ms JONES: I think it is really important to make this point. Was there a specific target like you had in government? No. I answered that question. The reason is that industry said to me that what they did not want was a target that the government had no intention of meeting. Did the former government meet their target? No.

Mr NICHOLLS: That is complete rubbish.

Ms JONES: What did they do? They sent out a 47-page guideline—

Mr NICHOLLS: Mr Chairman, we are now getting back into argument again. What we can say is we had a six-year target to reduce red tape by 20 per cent.

CHAIR: Order!

Ms JONES:—to go through legislation to count the words ‘should’, ‘can’, ‘will’, ‘will not’, ‘cannot’, ‘should not’.

CHAIR: Order, Minister.

Mr NICHOLLS: What we had in three years was a 14 per cent achievement of that target.

CHAIR: Order! We will not degrade into debate. This is not an area for debate. We are asking questions and expecting a response from the minister. We will not go into debate on either side. Minister, have you concluded your answer?

Ms JONES: I will conclude my answer by saying I will continue to listen to industry. I will continue to listen to the CCIQ, AIG and all of the representatives of the committee who say that what they want the red-tape council to do is to look at life examples of where regulation from all levels of government intersect and to look at how best we can work with industry to reduce that. I have agreed to the work plan by listening to members of the red-tape reduction council and I look forward to reporting back to parliament on our achievements as we work through that.

CHAIR: You have one last question, member for Clayfield.

Mr NICHOLLS: In terms of red tape, the minister perhaps did not answer the second part of my question which was: can she advise what red-tape reforms or reductions this government has progressed since the election?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said, we are working through our program of red-tape reduction. Also, we have invested—this is a good one, in fact—an additional \$4.7 million in our business and industry portal. You would know when you were in government—

Mr NICHOLLS: That was an LNP initiative.

Ms JONES: Exactly and I am saying here very clearly and very proudly—

Mr NICHOLLS: I am happy to ask you a question about that as well, if you want to go there.

CHAIR: Minister, can you answer the current question please?

Ms JONES: I am answering the question, thank you. So the question was: what are we doing to make a real difference to business to reduce red tape and to reduce the burden on them to interact with government? As I said, the previous government started the work on the business and industry portal, which I think is a very good initiative. In fact, I believe that it is so good that I have committed \$4.7 million in the state budget to redevelop that and to make it even more practical for small business.

It is worth pointing out that I raised this—and have consistently raised this since I became the minister—with all of the key stakeholders I have met with, including the red-tape council and the small business council, that this is what we had done and with overwhelming support. What it does is provide a one-stop shop for business to work with government. This has been something that has been welcome by industry and something that I want to continue to do.

We know that the portal has over 1,300 services available online and allows industry to access those. It links all 13 Queensland government agencies, making it easier for them to interact. So when you talk to small business, like we do, as I presume the honourable member does, what they say is that the biggest cost for them is not necessarily the actual regulation. They accept—and they said this last week and they have said this in numerous meetings with me—that there are many regulations that are in place for the right reasons, including protecting themselves and workers from harm. What they have said though is that one of the major concerns is the time that it takes to comply and the cost associated with that. That is why we are looking at things like the business portal, where businesses can use it from their own home, after hours, 24 hours a day, working through ways to actually comply with legislation in an easier format, and that goes to things like language on the forms.

One of the things that the council did talk about was having more of the information that is provided by government in different languages, recognising that for many small businesses in Queensland, because of our diverse multicultural community and economy, that information should be

in different languages. That is something we will be looking at. They also said they need forms that are written in plain English. What I saw consistently from business is that they want to look at ways we can make it easier to do business with the Queensland government. I am very proud to say that I recognise this, and I recognised this in the first budget of the Palaszczuk government which commits \$4.7 million to do exactly that.

CHAIR: I call the member for Lytton.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 2 of the SDS, can the minister advise the committee on ways in which the Palaszczuk government is increasing consultation with small business in Queensland?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. As I said in my opening statement, there are 400,000-plus small businesses in Queensland. So we have a lot at stake in their success. These businesses represent the foundation of our economy. That is why when you have governments that make decisions about their own policy that changes the dynamic in the economy that has a direct impact on small businesses. I have already quoted from a number of small businesses both here today and in the parliament throughout my time as a small business minister about that direct correlation that small business felt between the decisions and policy settings of the former government and the direct impact on their job. You only have to walk down George Street to see that.

The Palaszczuk government has committed from the very start to being a more open, consultative government that listens to business. I think I have demonstrated that very clearly, contrasting my approach with the member for Clayfield's. I have met with small business owners right across Queensland, down the length of the coast, in the outback and across South-East Queensland.

Mr NICHOLLS: I was not the small business minister last time. Come on! Give me a break.

Ms JONES: You were the treasurer.

Mr NICHOLLS: You have told us what we have done. What about what you have done?

Ms JONES: What I have heard consistently is that government needs to be more accessible for small business. Time poor small business owners often do not have the time to take away from the day-to-day running—and I see you nodding, member for Lytton, because I know you have operated a small business yourself—in order to engage with government. So looking at ways we can make that easier has been the No. 1 thing I heard throughout as the small business minister. This was reiterated at the small business council which is why in our first budget we have delivered \$4.7 million to do just that.

Opportunities presented by government from grants to procurement are often hard for hardworking businesspeople to get their minds across. So this is a real and genuine way to help them. On the other hand, the costs of complying with regulatory burdens can impair the growth and development of business. That is why we have introduced a number of measures which will open up the channels of communication between business and government. We heard the concerns about the regulatory burden and we went to the election, as I said, with the Red Tape Reduction Advisory Council—a real council, not a bunch of public servants sitting in a backroom counting words. We have also breathed new life into the Queensland Small Business Advisory Council, as I said, by expanding it to have genuine small businesses there as well. So overall I think that we have the foundations right to have a genuine partnership with small business to ensure that we continue to see growth.

CHAIR: You have one last question, the member for Lytton.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 5 of the Service Delivery Statement, can the minister provide an update on the very successful Home-based Business Grants Program?

Ms JONES: Thank you very much. This is a high note to finish on as well. I am very proud to inform the committee that yesterday applications opened for the Home-based Business Grants Program. Once again the genesis of this home based business grant was from business, business saying to us, 'What would really help us to create jobs is to have small funding, not big money, up-front to help us move from a concept to delivering a business here in Queensland. This was not only to create employment for themselves but potentially with the support of government—which is about that life cycle that I was talking about; once again consistent with what I have heard from industry across-the-board—about how we can grow that.

Prior to the application process being announced—so between me announcing the funding in the budget and us going public yesterday with applications—we had already received over 1,000 expressions of interest in applying for this business grant. That says to me that we have it right, that this is what people want and we are delivering that. We have already seen people voting with their feet in regard to applying for that.

After launching the program, the Mums in Business membership body posted on their website that they were so delighted to see Queensland take the initiative to invest in home based businesses. Mumpreneurs are generating millions of dollars for the Australian economy and are nimble and resourceful. They are able to get unique business ideas off the ground quickly. They are leading the way in digital innovation. Imagine what is possible with extra support. Once again, that is resounding praise for this program.

The Treasurer and I have been working closely in regard to delivering this election commitment. The budget commits \$1 million over three years and will be provided to the Home-based Business Grants Program to support stay-at-home mums. As I said, they did not ask for big dollars. I think people get lost in this—that it is about going through and slashing and burning. It is actually the small things that make a difference in small business. Having worked in small business myself—and I know you have worked in small business—I know how hard they work and that these small changes make a difference.

This funding, as I said, will be delivered over three years and will include grants of up to \$5,000. These grants are aimed at bridging the gap by providing the tools to home based entrepreneurs to develop their businesses. This means successful applicants will have the vital funding they need when they need it, at the beginning of their business to get up and running. The grants consist of two stages. Stage 1 will involve up to \$2½ thousand to engage consultants to provide them with the professional advice they need to make their business a success. This is work that will go towards having a business action plan. Many of the mentors in our Mentoring for Growth program say how surprised they are at small businesses which have set up a small business but do not have a small business action plan. So they step them through that. Can I say that we are working hand in hand with small business? Yes. Can I say that having job certainty for Queenslanders will impact on small business? Absolutely. I am very proud that we have seen growth in this regard.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. We have come to the end of our time for questions on small business. The committee will now examine the estimates for the Commonwealth Games. I welcome the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Mr Mark Peters, the CEO of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation. Minister, I invite you to make a brief statement to the committee if you would like.

Ms JONES: At the outset I want to acknowledge the bipartisan commitment by the member for Surfers Paradise to delivering the best Commonwealth Games ever in April 2018. As of today there are 953 days to go until the opening ceremony—953 days, seven hours and I believe 40 minutes, to be exact. Before we know it, the games will be upon us, and that is why we are working hard every day to ensure the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games are the best ever and that they leave a lasting legacy for the Gold Coast and Queensland.

We know that delivery of a great games requires a great team, and that is what we have put in place. I want to acknowledge the great work of Goldoc and the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery as well as our games partners, the City of Gold Coast, the Australian Commonwealth Games Association and the Commonwealth Games Federation.

In response to the Queensland Audit Office 2014 report on the Commonwealth Games progress, I established a Tourism and Commonwealth Games Cabinet Committee to provide the appropriate level of oversight for the games. Until today, I thought that was universally supported. I still believe it is universally supported except for one person. The cabinet committee ensures a single source of accountability and authority for the whole-of-games management.

These games are a great opportunity to showcase the Gold Coast and Queensland to the world. The games will bring 6,500 athletes and officials to Queensland. We will mobilise 15,000 volunteers. Competitors will represent 71 teams and 54 Commonwealth nations. We expect to see 1.5 million ticket sales and more than 1.5 billion viewers from around the world. It is a chance to bring tourism and business to our state, and it is a chance to create a lasting legacy. These games are expected to bring an economic benefit of \$2 billion and create up to 30,000 jobs. That is why we are committed to ensuring the games are delivered on time for the benefit of Queenslanders.

Mr LANGBROEK: I thank the committee for having me as a guest. I welcome the minister, public servants and members of the executive team. My first question refers to page 2 of the SDS, which speaks about the ultimate responsibility for coordination of preparations across all levels of government,

and I note the department has responsibility for coordinating the Commonwealth Games. Noting the importance of hosting a safe and secure event, do you have confidence in the police minister, Jo-Ann Miller—

CHAIR: Order! Deputy Leader of the Opposition, can you explain to the committee how it is relevant to our consideration of the budget estimates?

Mr LANGBROEK: Mr Chairman, it is very obvious; I made a reference to the SDS. The reference is there. It is coordination of preparations across all levels of government.

Ms JONES: I am happy to talk about security and the Commonwealth Games. I have no problem with that. If he wants to ask it in that way, that is his choice. The key issue, as he rightly points out, is whether I have confidence that the Queensland Police Service and the Australian Federal Police are working with Goldoc and the Commonwealth Games to deliver a secure event? Absolutely. If the honourable shadow minister is aware of any evidence that the Queensland police are not doing absolutely everything in their power to ensure we have a safe Commonwealth Games, I ask that he provide that information to me. What I know is that I elevated my Commonwealth Games committee, which I understand the member for Currumbin does not support, to a committee of the cabinet because we were going to have to look at really serious issues that looked at whole-of-government implications, and of course one of those key issues was security. I can advise the chair—

Mr LANGBROEK: Mr Chairman, with respect, I have listened—

Ms JONES: No, this goes to the point of your question. I can advise the chair that—

Mr LANGBROEK: No, the question is about the person who is the minister, who is responsible, Mr Chairman.

Ms JONES: The Queensland Police Service only recently briefed the committee—the Deputy Premier, the Treasurer, the chair of Goldoc and me—directly about how we can address those security concerns. So, in answer to your question: do I have—

Mr LANGBROEK: Was the police minister there, Minister, as part of that briefing?

Ms JONES: No. As I said, I heard directly from the Queensland Police Service.

Mr LANGBROEK: So you sidelined the minister?

Ms JONES: No, she is not a member of the committee. That is on the public record. She is not a member of the committee.

Mr LANGBROEK: So you would not invite her as a guest given that her department is there briefing your cabinet committee about Commonwealth Games security—

Ms JONES: Can I be very clear. I thought the honourable member would be aware that there is an intergovernmental group across government—all of the agencies that work on the whole-of-government implications for the Commonwealth Games. On that committee are representatives of the Police Service. I thought, as did the committee—and I am sure you are of the same opinion—that the police officers who are tasked with this job should brief the committee. So I heard firsthand from the police officers who are in charge of the security element of the games. That is whom I wanted to hear from because it is their job, and I wanted to hear from them firsthand.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question relates to page 24 of the SDS, which refers to operational security planning and risk assessment audits as part of the Gold Coast 2018 security program. It is at the bottom of page 24. I refer to the confidential briefs and high-level security meetings that will be held in preparation for the Commonwealth Games. We will host the heads of state of many countries. Do you have confidence in the ability of the police minister, Jo-Ann Miller, to protect confidential material?

CHAIR: Before you answer that, Minister, I would like to remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that under standing order 234 imputations or improper motives on all other members are deemed to be highly disorderly.

Mr LANGBROEK: It is a yes/no question, Mr Chairman. You cannot just invoke a standing order by making an assertion about an implication when it is a yes/no question. Does the minister have confidence in the ability of the police minister, Jo-Ann Miller, to protect confidential material?

CHAIR: I ask you to withdraw that question, deputy leader.

Mr LANGBROEK: Well, Mr Chairman, no, I will not. It is a question. I am asking the minister whether she has confidence in the police minister's ability to protect confidential material. There are no imputations in that question at all. It is a yes/no answer.

CHAIR: What is the relevance of the question?

Mr LANGBROEK: I have provided the relevance: it is at the bottom of page 24 of the SDS—

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer the question in this way. We have a shadow minister for the Commonwealth Games who has come in here and chosen deliberately to play politics on what is a major event—

Mr LANGBROEK: Security issues—

Ms JONES: No, it is not about security issues because I just briefed you—

Mr LANGBROEK: It is about security issues.

Ms JONES: As everyone in this committee should be well aware, I have offered the honourable member, in a bipartisan way, briefings on the Commonwealth Games. I recognise that there are significant consequences for Queensland and for Queenslanders with the Commonwealth Games. So what I have done? I have set a new framework on the basis of the Auditor-General's report which found that the former government was lacking when it came to governance to deliver the Commonwealth Games. It is a matter of public record that under the previous government both the Commonwealth Games Federation and the Auditor-General found the previous government wanting when it came to governance. What was the first thing I did? I fixed that governance.

In regard to major issues such as security—and I am really disappointed in the member for Surfers Paradise, who I thought was taking a bipartisan approach to the delivery of the Commonwealth Games so we could showcase the Gold Coast to the world and so this would be a great event. I am happy to articulate to the committee where we are at with security. I will not be playing politics with security and the Commonwealth Games. I will be delivering what Queenslanders expect of me. That is, they expect that I, along with the state and federal police and Goldoc, will take security seriously and deliver the games. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring the Commonwealth Games is safe and secure.

The threat level, as you know, was raised to high in September 2014. As a result, we have had to review our plans to ensure they are able to provide a safe and secure environment in the context of this revised threat. I believe we are very fortunate to have a Queensland Police Service which is well accomplished in this area. Members of the committee would be well aware that this was demonstrated for all of us in the successful execution of the G20 security arrangements. The Queensland Police Service has been revising its planning. As I said in my opening remarks and in reply to the question asked by the member for Surfers Paradise, why I have this confidence in the Queensland police—

Mr LANGBROEK: But not the minister—

Ms JONES:—that they are going to deliver security is that I have heard directly from them. I know that the police minister, just like every Queensland—maybe not those opposite given the line of questioning—believes that the safety and security of the Commonwealth Games is paramount. We owe it to all Queenslanders to ensure that we are not playing politics with this, that we are getting on with the job of protecting and securing the event, and that is exactly what I am doing.

Mr LANGBROEK: But it sounds like you are protecting the police minister—

Ms JONES: Do I have confidence that the police minister wants to deliver a safe and secure Commonwealth Games? Absolutely.

Mr LANGBROEK: Do you have confidence that she will or that she wants to?

Ms JONES: Am I confident that the people I have met with from the Queensland Police Service who are tasked with delivering this are doing a great job? I am, and I know that because I met with them personally. I am very pleased to advise the committee that I will continue to do the job, which is to ensure that we have a safe and secure games.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My next question is a very simple one. Does the minister have total confidence in the police minister delivering Commonwealth Games security?

Ms JONES: I have answered yes. I have absolute confidence that we will deliver a safe and secure games in Queensland.

CHAIR: The question has already been asked and has been adequately answered by the minister. Next question, please.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question refers to page 12 of the SDS, a \$1.3 million capital grant for the Broadbeach Bowls Club. Could the minister advise the committee of any issues regarding the upgrade of the Broadbeach Bowls Club?

Ms JONES: I am aware of issues in regard to the Broadbeach Bowls Club. I know that they want to expand their club. I have been to the Broadbeach Bowls Club since I became the Minister for the Commonwealth Games. As the member will know, as a consequence of the upgrades we are undertaking as part of the Commonwealth Games we have now been able to secure as a legacy for Queensland the lawn bowls championships in Queensland in 2020. From memory, I think that will generate \$20 million for the Queensland economy.

The total budget for the Commonwealth Games legacy works at the Broadbeach Bowls Club is \$2.7 million. This is going to be the premier venue for bowls for the Commonwealth Games. The scope of the Broadbeach Bowls Club project includes two separate portions, one of which is the GC 2018 legacy works which includes an upgrade of the clubhouse. The second portion is complementary works planned for the Broadbeach Bowls Club including a new gaming area. The second portion of this work is subject to finance and other approvals. My understanding is that these approvals are currently sitting with the council for approval. There are two separate pieces of work: the work that is happening with the Commonwealth Games and the work that is happening by the club. I understand the club is currently waiting for approval from the council in that regard. That is where it is at. It is a council approval issue. My understanding is that they are working that through with council.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you. I would like to continue along that line of questioning then. As the minister acknowledges, Goldoc representatives and departmental representatives have attended various meetings with the bowls club. There is an issue about that. They are making a significant commitment of borrowing \$1½ million and that is contingent on them getting poker machine licences and the poker machines themselves to be able to repay their loan. There is a significant issue—it is my electorate. I have played barefoot bowls at the Broadbeach Bowls Club and I have had numerous meetings with them over the years. What is the department doing to expedite the coordination between government departments so that they can get those poker machines and they can then repay the loan that is enabling the development and delivery of a better Commonwealth Games venue?

Ms JONES: I am well aware that they have these concerns. So I have also heard what has been expressed by the member for Surfers Paradise. It is currently before council with regard to the expansion that they require. Can they have absolute confidence in getting the \$2.7 million Commonwealth Games contribution to the work to upgrade the venue so it can be a venue for the Commonwealth Games? Yes. If the shadow minister would like to talk to me about any other matters in that regard—and I think you are referring to the approval of gaming machines—

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes.

Ms JONES: As you would well know, I am not the minister in charge of gaming machines. Obviously I am part of the Commonwealth Games spending—the \$2.7 million. I understand that there are genuine concerns about expansion for the club and I am happy to talk about that with you in the future. My understanding is it is currently with council for approval.

CHAIR: We have time for one more.

Mr LANGBROEK: In that case, I seek leave to table contract documentation from the GC 2018 Commonwealth Games meeting at the Broadbeach Bowls Club.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr LANGBROEK: Whilst the minister has offered to meet with me about this, as the local member and former minister in a portfolio that had no responsibility for the Commonwealth Games in the previous government, if there was an issue like that at the Broadbeach Bowls Club, as there was when I was the minister, I was able to make sure that I could expedite the things that the bowls club needed. This is a significant financial contribution that they are making. I am just asking whether the minister will seek to expedite the process that means that another minister who is responsible for poker machine licences—

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer that, absolutely. In answer to that question I also say that I am well aware of the issue. My understanding is that, as you have rightly pointed out, Goldoc representatives have met with the bowls club. We have provided funding for that and it is subject to council approval. Maybe you have more chance to talk to the mayor of the Gold Coast—

Mr LANGBROEK: I might. I may well do.

Ms JONES: You should do that. I am telling you—

Mr LANGBROEK: You are the minister.

Ms JONES: No, you are the local member. Let us answer this question. You are saying that you would do everything in your power to expedite the process.

Mr LANGBROEK: And I am doing it right now.

Ms JONES: It is sitting with council for council approval. How many times have you spoken to the mayor about it? I am happy to do everything in my power. I am being advised by Goldoc that it is currently with council and we are waiting on council's approval. If you have not rung the mayor yet, which you have just acknowledged you have not, I will ring the mayor myself.

Ms PEASE: As you have stated, the Commonwealth Games is a major generator of funds for the people of Queensland, but also a significant line item in the 2015-16 budget. I refer the minister to the SDS at page 4 and ask: can you please advise the committee what you have done to ensure sound oversight of the planning and delivery of the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games since becoming the minister responsible for this major international event?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. Since I became the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, as you rightly pointed out, I have introduced new measures to ensure the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games are delivered on time and for the benefit of all Queenslanders as well as, of course, Gold Coast residents, businesses and industry. I introduced these measures following the Queensland Audit Office December 2014 report on the Commonwealth Games progress, which found that, while preparations were progressing, there was no single source of accountability or authority for the whole of the games management. One of the first things I did was meet with the Auditor-General, Andrew Greaves, to discuss the report and his recommendations. I am advised that the former minister for the Commonwealth Games did not bother to meet with him at all.

Addressing the issues raised in the Auditor-General's report has been a priority, which is why I urgently met with the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games Corporation, the Australian Commonwealth Games Association and the city of Gold Coast Mayor, Tom Tate. We know that the games are set to deliver 30,000 jobs and leave a lasting impact on the economy of \$2 billion. I took immediate action to improve accountability so that Queenslanders and game partners could have faith that the games were on track. The measures I introduced provided a new level of leadership to the games delivery, with the establishment of the Tourism and Commonwealth Games Cabinet Committee. As I said, every single person I have spoken to, whether associated with the Commonwealth Games or in the tourism sector, has praised this except for the honourable member for Currumbin, who has said today that she did not think it was a good idea to elevate the Commonwealth Games to a cabinet committee.

The cabinet committee provides strategic direction for the delivery of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games and the Embracing 2018 legacy program. As part of these new measures, responsibility for the delivery of every aspect of the games, including infrastructure, rests with the Minister for the Commonwealth Games, who chairs that committee. This has been widely endorsed not only by members involved in the Commonwealth Games. I know—and I do not know whether Mark wants to put it on the record here—that has been welcomed by Goldoc. It has also been recognised by the latest CoCom report—and I know that members of the committee have been briefed on this. CoCom is the Commonwealth Games international body which comes and does a six-monthly health check to make sure that we are on track. Specifically, they have mentioned, which I might get to in another question, how they welcomed these advancements in governance.

Ms PEASE: Minister, with reference to page 4 of the SDS, could you advise the progress made in implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations?

Ms JONES: Thank you for that question. As I made reference to in my previous answer, one of the first things I did was meet with the Auditor-General because there had been no action by the previous government. Despite getting an Auditor-General's report saying that there were critical issues with regard to the governance and delivery, no action was taken by the previous government to do anything about those recommendations.

I am happy and I think it is important that, if we are coming from the perspective of a committee of ensuring we are delivering a good games, I go through that for the committee so you know exactly where they are at. The Auditor-General had five recommendations. The first recommendation was that the whole-of-games governance structure be revised to have a single source of delivery, accountability

and authority, including program management office and independent program assurance of planning effort. As I said when I became minister, I changed the governance arrangements of the Commonwealth Games to ensure that we do have that single point of authority. I announced these changes on 31 March and, once again, they were universally welcomed and endorsed. This has included the establishment of the committee of the cabinet, establishing the GC 2018 leadership group forum, which I hold regularly, which is a meeting between the city of the Gold Coast and chair of Goldoc, and strengthening the role of the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery.

To strengthen the program management capabilities of OCGD, a specialist program manager has also commenced employment. We now have a portfolio dashboard report, which provides an overview of the program across games delivery partners. So back to the original questions about whether I have confidence in the police being able to deliver their parts in regard to security and safety, that is part of the work that we are now collating as a whole of government. We also now have a Commonwealth Games portfolio management board which has been established to oversee the activities of the Queensland government, which I have just alluded to. We have also commissioned external specialists to provide independent program assurance to assess the planning efforts of delivery partners and strengthen the program capabilities of that.

Recommendation 2 is that Goldoc complete the functional areas strategic plans. Goldoc has done that and they have been reporting to me in regards to that progress. Goldoc and the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery have completed all functional areas strategic plans required at this stage of planning for GC 2018. I want to thank the officers who are here today who have been involved in this and have ensured that we are delivering on this recommendation of the Auditor-General.

Recommendation 3 is that the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery refine its current budget process to increase accuracy and confidence. OCGD has undertaken significant work in this regard. Nick is sick of the sight of me. The budget review will be an ongoing process undertaken by both OCGD and Goldoc, and we will continue to do that. The whole-of-games budget is monitored by a finance committee chaired by the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery and consists of a representative of relevant departments and the Queensland Audit Office. I think it is really important that we do have the Queensland Audit Office with us every step of the way to ensure that, given it is a substantial amount of public funds that are going into delivering the games, we have that oversight. That is something that I am particularly passionate about.

Recommendation 4 is that we implement or enhance the existing budgetary systems to capture and record all games costs and contingency movements. Another thing that I announced earlier in the year was that we would have a third-party audit, an internal audit, of OCGD budget systems. PricewaterhouseCoopers were engaged in May to undertake that audit. All recommendations of that audit have been accepted by the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery and the high-priority improvements have been implemented.

Finally, recommendation 5 is that we complete a legacy evaluation framework and include measures, targets, time frames and baseline data. As I said at the first meeting of the Commonwealth Games cabinet committee, we considered the evaluation and monitoring framework for these legacy items. There is a dashboard of indicators currently being developed and baseline evaluation and monitoring happening. I can keep going, but that is probably enough.

CHAIR: I call the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: With reference to page 25 of the SDS, I note that the Commonwealth Games Federation Coordination Commission reviews progress of the games every six months. I understand the commission recently reviewed progress, in June 2015. Could you outline the improvements that have been made since the previous review in October 2014?

Ms JONES: Yes I can. I had great pleasure with meeting with the chair of the Commonwealth Games Federation Coordination Commission, Bruce Robertson, and the CEO of the Commonwealth Games Federation, David Grevemberg, on their visit in June. I had the opportunity to meet with them here at Queensland parliament and they thought it was a most impressive building. The Commonwealth Games Federation Coordination Commission's most recent review was in June this year. In the press conference following the week spent reviewing the progress—they come out here to Queensland and they go through for a whole week, spending all their time with Mark, who gets to it and is very compliant—they issued a very strong endorsement of our progress and preparations and concluded that delivery of every aspect of the games is on track and on budget. I just want to clarify that the endorsement of CoCom is that every aspect of the games is now on track and on budget. That is what we have been able to achieve in the first six months.

In the report the commission noted the governance arrangements for the Commonwealth Games had matured and are now considered to be robust and effective. That is them saying that the changes that we have made have made a real difference. They particularly commended the new senior leadership forum established since the Queensland state election, referencing the Tourism and Commonwealth Games Cabinet Committee. The commission felt that the new governance's arrangements provided a clearer focus and point of accountability. At this point I should table the CoCom report so everybody can see it, in keeping with the recommendations made. I seek leave to table the CoCom reports, both from October 2014 and June 2015, which demonstrate a clear change in governance arrangements. They are executive summaries of those reports.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Ms JONES: The commission particularly highlighted the progress made on the \$320 million games infrastructure program, transport planning, sustainability, the health and knowledge precinct, and Embracing 2018 legacy program. CoCom congratulated games partners on commitments to obtaining sustainability certification and developing a reconciliation action plan. We are the first Commonwealth Games ever to be held that has had a reconciliation action plan. I think this is a wonderful legacy item of the Commonwealth Games and it is the first of its kind for any major event in Australia.

They also make specific comment on the continued excellent engagement and support by the Queensland government and the city of the Gold Coast. I do not think it is any secret—actually it is a matter of public record—that under the previous minister there were genuine concerns about the relationship between the former minister and the mayor of the Gold Coast, who is the mayor of the host city. In actual fact, the mayor claimed that he was made to feel like a mushroom by the former minister by being kept in the dark. I do not think that is helpful for the Commonwealth Games. I seek leave to table a copy of the public slanging match that happened between the mayor and the former minister in regard to the Commonwealth Games. I do not think that is helpful. CoCom certainly did not think that was helpful and have made specific reference to the fact that I have instigated a new system where I meet regularly with the mayor so we can actually go through those issues. That is why, now that it has been revealed that the honourable member for Surfers Paradise has not spoken to the mayor, I am happy to speak with the mayor if he thinks there is an opportunity to fast-track their current council approval. That is certainly not what people want to see and certainly has not been happening under my watch.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. One last question.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, continuing on with the reference of page 25 of the SDS, did the coordination commission have any comments on your management of the games specifically?

Ms JONES: The CoCom information reviewed the Commonwealth Games under the former government and this year, and it is good for everybody and the committee to know that we are seeing progress. I want to contrast what they said in October 2014 to where we are now. In October 2014 they said that they felt there was an emerging trend which may be impeding the effective sharing of information internally and across the partnership. The CoCom ask Goldoc to review the situation and put in place the necessary measures to ensure effective collaboration and integration and to report back. Perhaps they may have been referring to the stoush between the former minister and the mayor. As I have alluded to many times already, in the latest CoCom report delivered recently after the trip in June they acknowledge publicly that there are no longer these issues and that we have the host city working very closely with the Queensland government.

As one of the reforms that I have implemented, the CEO of the host city of the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games is on the Goldoc board. We had a Goldoc board meeting yesterday, and it was wonderful to have the CEO of the council there because it goes to the heart of making sure that we are able to tackle issues together as they emerge and not have a public slanging match in the media.

Mr LANGBROEK: With reference to the tourism cabinet committee that the minister has referred to in her previous suite of answers, I note that in her publicly published ministerial diary it met once, on 20 May. Can you advise the committee how often that particular committee has met since?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. When I announced it, we said that we would meet at least four times a year. We met on 20 May and 5 August, and I think our next meeting is scheduled for November. I have said four times a year and already this year we have met three times, so we are well on track to meeting that target.

Mr LANGBROEK: May I ask a couple of questions of some executives? Mr Chairman, I am not sure whether I can ask the acting director-general a question directly.

CHAIR: Yes, you may.

Mr LANGBROEK: This is with regard to the Auditor-General's report that has been referenced by the minister in the last suite of answers again. I note that the acting director-general in his then role stated in response to the Auditor-General on pages 55 and 56 that he had concerns about a number of errors in what the Auditor-General had to say. I am wondering what response you received from the Auditor-General in response to your comments to him.

Mr Martyn: The department forwarded its response to the Auditor-General at the end of 2014. The Auditor-General did not, as far as I am aware, write back to the department with regard to those matters raised.

Mr LANGBROEK: I note this direct quote from your letter—

I believe that a number of errors remain in the report, and officers from my department would be happy to work with your officers to correct these.

But you are confirming for the committee that you had no further response from the Auditor-General before he released the report that subsequently came out?

Mr Martyn: I am advised that, while there is no written response, we did work through some of those issues. As I recall, some of those issues were in relation to the presentation of budgets, different ways of presenting and just trying to make sure that an accurate portrayal of those matters was presented.

Mr LANGBROEK: I will then ask the CEO of the Commonwealth Games Corporation a similar question. I note that at page 65 through to page 68 of that comments section that you also, Mr Peters, had some significant comments about 'incorrect observations and statements, subjective statements and inaccuracies'. I am wondering what response you got from the Auditor-General's department. By the way, this is no reflection on the Audit Office. Given that you made comments before the Audit Office was going to print their report, did you get responses from the Auditor-General about those particular comments that you had made?

Mr Peters: Similar to the department, we had further discussions once we received the draft. After I forwarded that letter there was a response, and I would need to check the date of this, in which the Auditor-General wrote back acknowledging my comments in a formal reply. With the minister's approval, I can get a copy of that for the committee.

Mr LANGBROEK: Can we take that on notice?

Ms JONES: Yes, I am happy to. I do not know if you mind me commenting?

Mr LANGBROEK: Not at all.

Ms JONES: You are absolutely right in the sense that there was conjecture about some of the Auditor-General's report findings. Having been through these previously as a minister in other portfolios, there always is a bit of toing-and-froing between the Audit Office's interpretation of things and the agency's interpretation of things. I was briefed on all of those by the department and by Goldoc before I met with the Auditor-General, but still I felt from all of those meetings that there had to be some changes to the governance's framework. From the fact that the international body has now praised us for those reforms, I think I have made the right decision.

Mr LANGBROEK: I do not think any of us would disagree that, having moved from the original phase of procuring the games to the stage we were at in December, just before the election, there were going to be changes to the governance structure which have now been carried out. We are happy to acknowledge that.

Minister, with reference to the SDS again my question is about the coordination of preparations across all levels of government. Could you give some clarity—and maybe the CEO could as well—about the number of live sites intended for the Commonwealth Games, because I understand there are four. Are there plans to extend that to other sites? Will that potentially impact on people who are prepared to attend the actual events themselves?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. Obviously these are things that Goldoc will be looking at, because we do not want to have any negative impacts with regard to ticket sales or attendance. We currently have seven live sites proposed across Queensland, including one in Townsville. We are very mindful that we want to create the experience which happened in Glasgow,

where there was almost like a festival or carnival kind of feeling, throughout the whole of the Gold Coast during the games. We have included four live sites down the Gold Coast, and with regard to that I think we are still finalising with council what the final four live sites will be.

I genuinely take on board the possible concern that was raised in the question with regard to making sure we get the balance right between creating those experiences through our arts and cultural program as well, for which significant funding has been provided. I have recently gone out to the market to secure an arts and cultural director. I think there is a balance that needs to be struck, but I can assure the honourable member genuinely that we are mindful of that and we are working through that as Goldoc so that we can create opportunities for people who may not be able to go to the games but who certainly want to be part of the games experience. Increasingly we are seeing that at all major events there is normally the premium experience, which is attending the event, but also the wraparound events and experiences that help make the event a bigger event and also obviously encourage people to stay and spend their money locally in the economy.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question is about cycling. I note that track cycling is not going to be on the Gold Coast but there are concerns that the road cycling could be moved from Elanora in the Currumbin Valley. Could you advise the committee, please?

Ms JONES: I am happy to give advice on that. I have not heard those concerns myself, but I am happy to get that from Goldoc.

Mr Peters: The article that recently appeared in the paper was incorrect. The consideration is whether we bring the road cycling track in the same area closer to the coast to get in the iconic vision. At the moment it is up through Currumbin et cetera. That is still the location; it is just whether we move it closer to the coast to pick up more of those helicopter shots which become great tourism vision. No decision has been made at the moment. We are talking to the council and Australian cycling and international cycling. The location is still the same.

Ms JONES: If you two want to meet about that and any concerns you have as the shadow minister, I am happy for that to happen as well.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Minister. On SDS page 25 there are a few references to the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery. Would the minister provide the breakdown of the number of people working in this office and the specific responsibilities of the office?

Ms JONES: I did ask this last night. We are continuing to grow both the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery and indeed Goldoc, and that is expected as we get closer to the games for all the good reasons that have been discussed here today. As we get closer to the games we are going to see an evolution happening, so we will have to have more staff to deal with the bigger issues that we face, whether it is security or the logistics of transport. As such I think I announced with you and Goldoc that you employed your 100th employee, who was a local from the Gold Coast. With regard to the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery, there are 21 full-time-equivalent staff currently.

Mr LANGBROEK: Are there any particular initiatives they are working on? I know there is obviously going to be an expansion of the things they are doing, but are there specific initiatives?

Ms JONES: Yes. I am happy to talk about that. Obviously the dominant part of the beginning of the Commonwealth Games discussion here today was about how we are interfacing with other agencies. The Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery is the peak body within government that is responsible for pulling together all of the agencies that are going to have an input into the Commonwealth Games—for example, security, transport, construction and ensuring that we have universal disabled access. We are doing everything in our power to make it open to all people. We are dealing with TAFE Queensland with regard to recruiting volunteers and making sure they are trained. We are also working to ensure that infrastructure is being delivered on time.

Given that he has come all this way, I am also happy to ask Nick, who is running the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery, if there is anything else he would like to add to that regarding the work plan and also about making sure that we are staying within budget, which he is very much tasked with. As I said earlier, we have put many new procedures in place, including having an audit of systems to make sure that Queenslanders and parliamentarians have absolute confidence that we are getting the best bang for buck.

Mr Elliott: The minister's answer was quite comprehensive in terms of the operations of the Office of Commonwealth Games Delivery. The two primary things that I would add in terms of deliverables are the delivery of the arts and culture program in support of the event and also legacy

and the very important matter of ensuring that Queenslanders, and Gold Coasters in particular, benefit from the events. We are working very closely with the Gold Coast City Council and the federal government around driving our legacy ambitions and achieving legacy outcomes.

The final point I would make is that this program involves activity across the three tiers of government. Whilst the minister has described the work we do across Queensland government agencies, we also work very closely with the federal government and the City of Gold Coast and the councils of Townsville, Cairns and Brisbane.

Ms JONES: There is a committee with representation from the council and the federal government that I attended which has all officers from the major state government agencies that are involved. The Australian government and the council are there, so there is no single level of government which is off doing its own thing without talking to the others. That is a regular meeting, and I have attended that meeting to see firsthand what they are doing in that regard.

Mr LANGBROEK: Mr Elliott, are you based at the Benowa TAFE in my electorate?

Mr Elliott: No, I am based in Brisbane but I do spend a fair bit of time down the coast.

Ms JONES: Would you like Nick to be based with you?

Mr Peters: Minister, we are all one big happy family so we would welcome anyone.

Mr LANGBROEK: Minister, you mentioned that Mr Elliott had come such a long way, so I presumed he had come from the Gold Coast.

Ms JONES: Oh, no. I meant to be here today. He is very passionate about the Commonwealth Games. He works all the time. He is a very hard worker.

Mr LANGBROEK: My next question, Mr Chairman, is to the CEO. I think you are at the old TAFE at Benowa, Mr Peters?

Mr Peters: That is correct.

Mr LANGBROEK: Have there been significant refurbishments or changes to the building's structure to enable Goldoc to be housed there?

Mr Peters: Yes, we have converted an education institution into office accommodation. Certainly the way that we need to operate is that the entry floor has now been renovated for meeting rooms, which include the boardroom. It is important that, given the number of people we will have visiting the building, we are able to separate our operations from our staff. It is a normal conversion from what was very much a classroom style building A and building D into a more open space, which allows us to fit more people in there and operate more efficiently.

Mr LANGBROEK: There are still students there in a couple of the heavy industries; is that correct?

Mr Peters: Yes. Our initial agreement was that we would progressively take over. As the minister said, we will be building our staff. At the moment we are around 120 staff. We will be progressing into the mid-260s by June next year and then we are somewhere around 500 in June 2017 leading into perhaps 1,400 at games time. So it is a fairly extensive expansion. The positive relationship we have is TAFE are gradually moving a number of their students out to other locations, but they will keep their trades section still at that location. So we are working very cooperatively with them at the moment and believe it will adequately cater for our accommodation needs before we move into venues which is just before games time.

CHAIR: Deputy Leader of the Opposition, I will give you one more question before we move on to government questions.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you, Mr Chairman. My question is to the CEO again about the target for commercial revenue being \$272 million. This is on page 25 of the SDS. The target is 20 per cent of commercial revenue which is \$54 million. Can you explain to the committee which areas you are expecting to see progression in in terms of that \$54 million? Is it broadcast rights payments? Perhaps you could advise the committee.

Mr Peters: The components of that overall target relate to sponsorship, broadcast revenue, licensing and merchandising and ticketing. The majority of that will happen in the later stages of our existence, but certainly against that 20 per cent target that will include our broadcast revenues.

Broadcast commitments are actually negotiated by the international federation, the Commonwealth Games Federation, but we are the recipients of the revenue but in turn we have to provide the broadcast function. So you are correct in identifying broadcasting as being one of the beneficiaries to us in the initial stages, and some of those negotiations have been completed to date and we are working with the international federation on markets in New Zealand and the UK at the moment.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thank you.

CHAIR: We will now move to questions from government members.

Ms PEASE: Minister, with reference to the SDS at page 4, an important aspect of hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2018 is ensuring that Queensland is left with a lasting legacy from that commitment. I commend the work that the minister has done to date in this area and seek an update for the committee in relation to the work done.

Ms JONES: I know that the member for Surfers Paradise genuinely shares my passion with regard to ensuring there is a lasting legacy for the Gold Coast from the Commonwealth Games. I have had the privilege of meeting three times with the former premier of Queensland, the Hon. Rob Borbidge, the chair of the legacy committee. As a matter of public record, I am very grateful that he is in that role. I know that he brings a wealth of experience and I know how passionate he is about ensuring that legacy, and I want to publicly acknowledge the great work that he is doing in that regard. The other thing I like about Rob is that he is very frank and I think that comes from probably having seen the highs and lows of politics, like many of us in this room.

This is something that I am particularly passionate about. When we held a community cabinet meeting on the Gold Coast when we made the decision that we should go ahead with the Commonwealth Games and bid for it ensuring major legacy outcomes for the Gold Coast and for Queensland was the main motivator, and I am very pleased to be delivering on that. In particular, I am very focused as the Minister for Small Business on the real opportunity here which we are delivering on with regard to creating work for people on the Gold Coast to stay working on the Gold Coast. So far in terms of the contracts awarded for venue construction, 95 per cent of those have been won by firms within South-East Queensland and many of them are Gold Coast companies.

In actual fact, when I was recently at a games venue at Coomera I met with a family where the father and seven of his sons who all live down the Gold Coast were all working on the same site and job together. That was just a really good story about how we are supporting local families and local jobs. Similarly, when I was at Carrara to see the work that is happening there the workers on site that I spoke to said that for some of them this was the first job they have had on the Gold Coast in years because of the downturn in the economy. Some of them have had to move to Newcastle to get work or fly in, fly out of the Gold Coast or of course travel up the freeway. For them from a legacy perspective, being able to create real employment and job opportunities on the Gold Coast for Gold Coast residents and workers is something that I have been particularly pleased by. I know that that makes a difference to their families because that is what they say to me, because they are spending more time with their families.

In more concrete numbers, \$320 million is being invested in venues which is generating more than 1,000 full-time jobs during design and construction. We have also been working closely with managing contractors to ensure local businesses have full and fair access to tendering opportunities. More than 94 per cent of all contracts for the Gold Coast Aquatic Centre and the Gold Coast Turf Club projects were awarded to businesses in the region.

As I said, the other thing we have been working on for the first time for a major event like this is a reconciliation action plan. It is a nation first and I think that this is a really good way of keeping the reputation of the Commonwealth Games being the friendly games. It is a plan that has a specific focus on enabling Indigenous artists and cultural businesses to benefit from the games as well as providing employment opportunities. I know that this has excited Goldoc as well.

I made mention earlier in my opening remarks that the investment that we have made in the Commonwealth Games and in the venues there has also enabled us to attract new events that otherwise would not have been here in Queensland or indeed the Gold Coast. I know I keep talking about it, but there is the Australian lawn bowls tournament at the Broadbeach bowls club, the ITU World Triathlon Series and NetFest. These events will continue to bolster the Gold Coast's reputation as a premiere sporting destination in the lead-up to the games.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to page 24 of the SDS and the official handover ceremony in Glasgow, can you please advise who represented the state government and what the benefits of this trip were?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. I am advised that the delegation, as a matter of public record, consisted of the former minister for the Commonwealth Games, Jann Stuckey; Dr Richard Stuckey, the husband of Mrs Stuckey, who paid for himself; the director-general of DTSBI; as well as Mr James Martin who, as it was reported in the report, I understand, tabled by the former minister, was the Chief of Staff to Mrs Stuckey. However, as part of my preparations for estimates what has been brought to my attention is that the travel occurred to Glasgow from 29 July to 10 August 2014. It is my understanding that on 21 July James Martin, the former Chief of Staff to Mrs Stuckey and indeed the former state treasurer of the LNP, was employed by the then minister and member for Aspley, Minister Tracy Davis. So he was not the Chief of Staff to Jann Stuckey. Unless someone else can advise me, I have found this as a matter of public record, including James Martin's own LinkedIn page where he says that he commenced work with the former minister for communities in July 2014. As I said, this trip to Glasgow was to look at the legacy outcomes of the Glasgow games and that travel occurred from 29 July to 10 August.

I have been advised that James Martin was actually in the employ of another minister when he took the trip to Glasgow. I see why government members of the committee are shaking their heads, because it is of concern to me. One would think that if you were truly interested in looking at the legacy outcomes of Glasgow then you would at least take a staff member who worked for you or a staff member who intended to work for you. Given I have had the revelation by his own admission that he was no longer working for the honourable member for Currumbin, the former minister for the Commonwealth Games, and indeed had started working with another minister, I will be writing to the director-general of Premier's to see whether this actually complies with the Ministerial Handbook. Regardless, I think it is a major concern to us that this \$40,000 trip for the minister and her former Chief of Staff to supposedly go to Glasgow to look at the legacy outcomes took place. I am happy to table it; it was \$39,109. I think there are serious questions about accountability here. We have a minister who has taken a staff member who no longer works for her on a \$40,000 trip to Glasgow to supposedly, in her own words, look at the legacy outcomes.

CHAIR: Excuse me, Minister—

Ms JONES: I raise this because in the SDS there is a clear reference to Glasgow and this was an expense borne by the taxpayers of Queensland. The estimates hearing is exactly the place to look at the expense of taxpayers and this is \$40,000 which I think is questionable, at the very least. Maybe there is a very good reason there was no-one else in Jann Stuckey's employ that could possibly go to Glasgow and she had to take an employee from another minister's office. I do not know. Maybe that is the case. Needless to say, I think there is enough evidence prima facie for me to be writing to the director-general of Premier's to ask MSB to investigate.

CHAIR: Minister, do you seek leave to table that document?

Ms JONES: Yes, I do; thank you.

CHAIR: Leave is granted.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you please advise how the Commonwealth Games will benefit small business in Queensland?

Ms JONES: I did allude to some of this in my previous answer. I got a bit excited. The Palaszczuk government, as I said, is dedicated to supporting small business in Queensland because they are vital to our economy and delivering jobs. What we know is that when government invests that creates jobs. I can advise you that 95 per cent of contracts awarded for venues, as I said, have gone to businesses and local firms in South-East Queensland, many of them being Gold Coast businesses. One example of a small business benefitting from the games is Alltype Welding. They are prefabricating 600 tonnes of structural steel required for the Coomera indoor stadium superstructure and they were the people I was referring to before with the dad and the seven sons. Alltype Welding currently employs 65 full-time workers as a steel fabrication rigger, painter, sandblaster, crane driver, truck drivers and office support. More importantly, they have two workshop apprentices and nine trainees. These are the legacy outcomes that we are focused on as a government.

One does have to question whether the former government was truly interested in legacy outcomes when the former minister chose to take a staff member whom she knew was never going to continue to be in her employ to actually implement any, if any, of the recommendations. In actual fact,

I have spoken to staff here about what was the outcome of her \$40,000 trip to Glasgow with the Chief of Staff to Tracy Davis. There is nothing on the public record or indeed a change in policy that I have been able to find to show that there was any outcome from that trip except for the questions raised about whether it was an appropriate use of taxpayers' money.

The forward procurement schedule lists a range of anticipated procurement activities. What we have done is made sure that we have a formal procurement schedule so that businesses can have the opportunity in advance to plan and bid for work. Some of the major procurements that are already underway and expected to be contracted by January 2016 include the host broadcaster, which the member for Surfers Paradise was asking about; a ticketing provider; and ceremony production companies. Major upcoming procurement activities for Goldoc in 2015-16 will be the ICT systems and equipment such as the games management systems and creative design services, and that is very exciting because of course creative design will be very much looking at the mascot and we are working through that. As you know, we recently had the competition for the mascot and we had thousands of downloads for that and we will be launching the new mascot early next year in consultation with the Gold Coast City Council, because obviously it needs to be an emblem that reflects Queensland but also reflects the host city.

Other procurement activities include uniform design and manufacture; bus and passenger vehicle fleet; training providers; security providers, and that is something that we have already talked about with the committee; and also equipment hire such as all the basics that you need to have a major event and, for the record, the largest event that will be held in Australia over the next 10 years. This includes equipment hire such as temporary fencing, barricades, HVAC, tents, change rooms, toilets and generators. This is all of the work that we need to achieve in the next couple of years as well as security equipment such as X-ray machines and archway magnetic readers; security services, including CC surveillance, patrols, protection and crowd control; competition sporting equipment; and medal design and podium design and manufacture and of course the baton as well.

This is an exciting time and we really want to make sure that through the Commonwealth Games investment of \$1.5 billion by the Queensland government we are deriving real outcomes for local businesses. My eye, as I know is Rob Borbidge's eye and indeed most people here, is on ensuring that we have a lasting legacy from the Commonwealth Games. I am going to raise this because it was raised earlier in the committee hearing—and it has been universally endorsed until today—but really understanding the tourism benefits that the Commonwealth Games provides as the largest event to be held in Queensland in terms of delivering jobs and jobs creation is critical and we have elevated it to this level for that reason.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I think we have time for one last question. I invite the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the last question, please.

Mr LANGBROEK: Thanks, Mr Chairman. Minister, you have just made some significant allegations about a former minister in our government. Have you referred these matters to the Crime and Corruption Commission?

Ms JONES: I was going to. Because it is advice that has only been brought to my light I thought the first thing I should do is find out from the employer whether, indeed, it is true that he stopped working for Jann Stuckey on 21 July. Before we do that my understanding, my preliminary understanding, is that that is the case.

Mr LANGBROEK: So you believe that corruption was carried and you have just—

Ms JONES: No, I never said that. No, what I said—

Mr LANGBROEK: I think you asserted that there was a chance that there has been something done that does not comply with the Ministerial Handbook. Therefore, my question is: have you referred this to the Crime and Corruption Commission?

Ms JONES: No, only because the initial advice I have received and what I believe is the right thing to do—and I am asking questions, yes. So what I have been able to discover through my preparations—

Mr LANGBROEK: Through your rumour and innuendo.

Ms JONES: No. Can I just be very clear.

Mr LANGBROEK: Yes, I would like you to be very clear.

Ms JONES: Yes, I am happy to.

Mr LANGBROEK: Because some of the things you are saying are really quite outrageous if they are proven not to be true under the protection of the coward's castle. That is what I think you are doing, which is typical of this nasty and vindictive Palaszczuk government of which you are a part.

CHAIR: Thank you, member. I gave you the last question. I will ask the minister to complete the answer.

Ms JONES: No, the reason I raise it here is that this is budget estimates and it looks at how we allocate and we spend, as public officials, taxpayers' money. I have raised the question.

Mr LANGBROEK: And you waited until late in estimates in this part to put out your assertion.

Mr CRAMP: And what a waste of time.

CHAIR: Order! Thank you.

Ms JONES: I waited until I had a question which was relevant so I could talk to you. So what we have seen here—and it is not innuendo; it is a matter of public record. I refer you to James Martin's own public update on his own—

Mr CRAMP: He set it up with a colleague to ask a question in estimates.

Ms JONES:—LinkedIn website saying that he no longer worked. In his own words, he has said that he no longer worked for Jann Stuckey at the time he undertook the trip to Glasgow. I have discovered this through my preparations for estimates. What I am saying is that my advice is that he started working for Tracy Davis on 21 August. This trip occurred on 29 July and went through until August. All I am saying is that there are serious questions—I agree with you—in regard to whether this is a good use of taxpayers' money if indeed the minister knew, when she took that member, that he either no longer worked for her or indeed had no intention of continuing to work for her when the whole point, in her own words in her own report of going to Glasgow and spending \$40,000 of taxpayers' money, was to look at the legacy outcomes from the Glasgow games so we can use those learnings to implement here on the Gold Coast.

So I would say to you that, having discovered this, I am now going to seek clarification, and I am happy for you or the honourable member to stand up here today and say, 'No, Minister, he was always in the employ of Jann.' But that is not what he said publicly.

Mr LANGBROEK: Or it might be part of the broader—

Ms JONES: And that is not the advice that I have received to date that says that he started working for Tracy Davis on 21 July.

CHAIR: Thank, you, Minister. Our time allocation has now come to a conclusion for the consideration of the estimates for the expenditure in the portfolio of Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games.

On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, the director-general and officials for your attendance. The transcript of this session of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliamentary website later today. I remind you that the deadline for questions taken on notice and clarifying material is 5 pm on Thursday, 27 August.

Ms JONES: Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 12.48 pm to 1.49 pm



CHAIR: The committee will examine the proposed expenditure contained in the Appropriation Bill 2015 for the portfolio area of the Minister for Education. The committee will examine Education from—and if I can just draw your attention to this correction—1.49 pm to 3.34 pm. So we will just use that extra time and then we will return again at 4 pm until 5.45 pm, Minister, if you are happy with that. The committee will suspend proceedings during this time for afternoon tea at 3.34 pm. I remind those present today that these proceedings are similar to parliament and subject to the standing rules and orders of parliament. I remind members of the public that, under the standing orders, the public may be admitted to or excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply here. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115. Therefore, questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles or arguments or opinions. I intend to guide proceedings this afternoon so that relevant issues

can be explored without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. Where necessary, I will remind the minister, director-general and officials that their answers should be finalised so that other issues can be examined.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome to the hearing the member for Everton, who has been granted leave to attend; the minister, the Hon. Kate Jones; the director-general, Dr Jim Watterston; the CEO of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Mr Chris Rider; and officials. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the minister or the director-general. The first session, between 1.49 pm and 3.34 pm, will include questions directed to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Education open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, would you care to make a brief opening statement?

Ms JONES: Yes, thank you.

CHAIR: Up to five minutes.

Ms JONES: Thank you. I thank the committee for the opportunity to address you this afternoon and recognise your interest in education. As you know, I am passionate about education, because I know firsthand its power to transform your life for the better. We have more than 770,000 students, including 525,000 state school students, in more than 1,230 schools. We expect to see state school enrolments grow by at least 11,000 students per year. I also want to acknowledge and thank from the outset the 46,500 teachers and principals in our state schools. I would like to recognise the Education support staff who are the backbone of our system and work tirelessly to ensure that our schools operate in a way that they can provide the best possible education for young Queenslanders.

Labor is the party of education. Over the last decade we have delivered major reforms to our education system to lift education outcomes for all students. It was the former Labor government that introduced the full-time prep year, which has seen our children get the very best possible start to their schooling. It was the former Labor government that put Queensland on the road to universal access for kindergarten attendance and it was the former Labor government that charted the course to move year 7 to high school. Already, we have seen the benefits of these reforms, reflected consistently in improving NAPLAN results. These results show that Queensland is the state taking the biggest steps forward—that is, the fastest gains—when it comes to NAPLAN results.

We are a government committed to ensuring that every Queensland child has the opportunity for a quality education. That is why in 2015-16 we delivered a record \$9 billion Education budget. We know that every dollar we spend on education will reap dividends for the future. It includes \$152 million over three years to employ an additional 875 teachers above growth. In total, we will employ an additional 2,500 teachers over three years. Chair, the former government cut more than 500 teachers, and this decision put greater pressure on class sizes, stole precious preparation time and limited teachers' opportunity to access professional development. We believe that our investment in more teachers in this year's budget will start to address some of these shortfalls.

We are also investing \$763 million over four years in school maintenance. We are talking about a massive building portfolio worth billions. It includes, as I said, 1,234 schools, including 18,000 buildings and 32,000 classrooms. We are not just providing new money; we are delivering a smarter, more cost-effective way of maintaining our schools through asset life-cycle maintenance and facilities management agreements. We know that this new way of doing things is providing better school facilities and it is providing a better education for all students. Our maintenance spend also includes \$10 million to improve state special school facilities.

Chair, I am also pleased to announce that the Palaszczuk government will introduce a new assessment and tertiary entrance system for senior students. The new system will be phased in for students entering year 11 in the 2018 school year. For the first time it will include a mixture of both school based assessment and external assessment. I will establish and chair a ministerial task force to oversee these changes with this framework right into the implementation date of 2018. It is all part of our commitment to delivering quality education for Queensland students.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Thanks, Mr Chairman and good afternoon, Minister.

Ms JONES: Good afternoon.

Mr MANDER: On 30 July you reported a serious IT failure relating to the enhancements made to the OneSchool system in relation to child protection. You advise that, since those enhancements came into effect, there were 3,822 cases that had been reported by school principals; however, 644 of those were not passed on to the appropriate child protection authorities. Minister, how many of the 644 incidents were reported whilst you were minister?

Ms JONES: Nearly all of them, as I said, because the failure of the update occurred in January, obviously before I was the minister. But I was briefed throughout the time as minister that the system was working, as were all the principals who were relying on the system to work. That is a matter of public record and what I have said.

What we saw was an introduction of an online reporting system for allegations or concerns regarding child abuse being put into place in September 2013, and that was updated again in January 2015. In January 2015, there was a change to the system to allow reporting of suspected child abuse directly to the police, to police and Child Safety, and to Child Safety only. What we have found is that, while the reports to Child Safety had predominantly gone through, the reports to the police and Child Safety—that thread—had not gone through.

As soon as I became aware of that I advised the public. I thought it was really critical that everyone was aware that this was the case and we have taken steps to ensure the system is fixed and is now working. Furthermore, we have put in measures to ensure daily that there are checks between Child Safety, police and Education—manually being checked daily—to ensure that all reports through the OneSchool system are getting to Child Safety and police.

Conversations that I have had with principal associations, the Teachers' Union and other stakeholders have advised me that they have confidence in the system. I want to acknowledge the work of the departments, both Education and Child Safety, and the police, who have worked tirelessly to ensure the system is now fixed and we await the Deloitte report.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Minister. On 31 July you were quoted in the *Brisbane Times* saying—

One of the first meetings I had when I became the minister ... is with the police department, the child safety minister, the head of child safety, the head of child safety in my own department and the director-general, so I understood clearly what systems were in place to ensure these reporting mechanisms were happening.

Could you point to your diary, please, and tell me when that meeting took place?

Ms JONES: It was 20 April.

Mr MANDER: So that was two months after you became the minister and you stated that that was one of the first meetings you had. That is a fairly lengthy period of time to be one of your first meetings, is it not?

Ms JONES: To answer that question, one of the first meetings I had with my director-general was absolutely about IT, because I think, as the minister, there were a lot of lessons learned from the Health payroll system and I asked to be informed of any IT systems where there was going to be any significant or reform or changes while I was the minister. I was informed that there were none at that time that I needed to be briefed on.

In regard to child safety, as I said, this is an issue that I take very seriously. In my incoming briefs and my discussions with Petrea, who is the head of state schooling, we have talked about child safety in the past—and I was in my initial briefings as the minister, which was about what systems we have in place. I was assured, as were all principals—and indeed everyone at this table—that the solution implemented in September 2013, which moved to an online reporting system, was working and, furthermore, that the update to the system in January as a result of the \$9 million Carmody report was also working.

As the honourable member would be well aware, I was able to provide him with a brief on the ICT system with the relevant officer in charge so he could have a briefing coming into this meeting, because I do take it seriously and I acknowledge that he wanted to know more for this meeting. I think that is admirable. I was happy to provide that, because this is a serious matter. I was advised, as were all principals, that it was working. Similarly, principals were receiving an email from the system confirming that their reports had gone through.

What I asked for on 20 April at that meeting—recognising that child safety was one of the major issues as a minister that I needed to have responsibility for—was a meeting with the child safety minister, the director-general of Child Safety and the Queensland Police Service where we talked through how we report child safety as a department. At that meeting I was advised that the system was working.

Mr MANDER: Can you please clarify specifically who gave you that assurance?

Ms JONES: I am just trying to think who was in the meeting at the time—everyone. I mean, honestly, everyone I have spoken to since I became the minister has advised me that the system was working.

Mr MANDER: Minister, what questions did you ask to get that assurance?

Ms JONES: At the briefing that I just spoke about where I had, I think it was the Acting Director-General Annette Whitehead in the meeting, as you were away, the head of police, the director of Child Safety—remembering the whole point of the system is about how do we, under the act, complete our obligations to provide any reporting from the education department to Child Safety; so the end user—

Mr MANDER: I understand all that, but what questions did you ask to get that assurance?

Ms JONES: Just give me a moment, if you can. I spoke directly to the director-general of Child Safety regarding how they got the information from our department and was he confident that he was getting the information from our department, where I was given the assurance that they were.

Mr MANDER: Did you ask the question whether the system been tested—the enhancements that happened on January 22?

Ms JONES: I absolutely would have if I had been the minister at the time that it was implemented.

Mr MANDER: No, not when it was implemented.

Ms JONES: I am answering your question, member for Everton. I will get to what oversight was given by the former minister in regards to his Child Protection Education Implementation Committee that was established by the former government and met nine times in 2014. Do you know how many times the former minister met with the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee? Not once. Not once. The former minister—

Mr Boothman interjected.

Ms JONES: No, it did not. I take the interjection. It went live in January before I was sworn in as a minister in February.

Mr MANDER: Minister, I am not disputing that.

Ms JONES: I am answering your question. If I had been the minister when the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee was established, when the update had been undertaken, when the decision was made off the back of the \$9 million Carmody report that we had to change the way that we did reporting in Queensland, absolutely I would have been asking all those questions.

Mr MANDER: You would have.

Ms JONES: And I would have met the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee.

Mr MANDER: That is fine, Minister, I am not asking you that question. I am asking you when you were minister did you ask questions of those officials?

Ms JONES: About whether it was tested when it went live?

Mr MANDER: That was one of the questions. Did you ask whether any of the cases that had been reported had been substantiated?

Ms JONES: From the child safety department? As I have said to you, the Child Safety director-general sat in my office and advised me, as did the police, as did Education—all three, around a table, in concert—that the system was working. Did I argue with the three of them, the three experts in the room, about whether their advice to me was untrue?

Mr MANDER: Well, Minister, are you in the practice of just accepting the advice that bureaucrats give you at face value or do you as a minister ask investigative questions?

Ms JONES: Absolutely, and it is in stark contrast to your ministerial colleague when you were in cabinet.

Mr MANDER: You have not answered whether you have asked those questions.

Ms JONES: Yes, I have. I have said I absolutely had. Unlike your former minister who never bothered to meet or implement these recommendations, never bothered to even meet once with the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee that was established to implement these reforms, that was established to implement the reforms in January, which happened under your watch. He did not bother to meet with the implementation committee. Not once did he bother to meet with them. They met nine times under his watch and he never bothered to meet with them. So do not come in here and say I should have been meeting them in 2014 before it went live when at that time I was not even a candidate let alone a member of the parliament.

Mr MANDER: Minister, no-one has suggested that. I do not know where you have got that interpretation from.

Ms JONES: Because it went live in January. I became a minister in February.

Mr MANDER: My questions are about you. When you first received briefings from the bureaucrats did you simply accept what they said or did you ask investigative questions to test the information that you had received, because the information you received was obviously wrong.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, Minister, before you answer that I think you have asked that question previously.

Mr MANDER: I have not received an answer.

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer it because what I asked was questions like, and which I had been briefed on, how many reports go through. What they were advising me was both Child Safety and police were receiving reports from our agency. I asked them whether they had faith in the system. They all said yes, it was working, and we are continuing to receive reports—in actual fact, they thought the system was very good. I am happy to throw to the director-general who advised me in our meetings that the system was working and I did ask, 'Is it working well? How do you find it? Is it doing what it should be doing?' Every single one of them, like every single principal that I have spoken to, has said that they thought the system was working. I am very pleased to advise the committee that, unlike the minister before me, who did not bother to meet with the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee, the committee established by his government to implement the update, the update that happened in January, the update that was actually implementing the Carmody recommendations, the biggest piece of work, an election commitment of the former government that cost taxpayers \$9 million, he never bothered once to meet with the implementation committee. Did I meet with police? Yes. Did I meet with Child Safety? Yes. Did I seek assurances from my department? Yes. I did that because I am a minister that is committed to making sure that we are getting this right.

Mr MANDER: Obviously you received poor advice, so could you give us details, please, of the positions and the levels of the staff that you have stood down?

Ms JONES: I am happy to and I am happy to take advice. In actual fact, I did not stand them down.

Mr MANDER: I do not need the names, just the positions and levels, that is all.

Ms JONES: Okay. My understanding is the DDG has stood aside while the investigation is underway and two contractors who were employed to undertake the update in January have also been stood aside. I am happy to throw to the director-general to see if that is correct.

Dr Watterston: Can I make one correction? I also need to point out that this was an operational matter so I stood the three people down. In fact, the deputy director-general of Corporate Services voluntarily stood down. He felt that he had a conflict of interest and so it was his choice to remove himself from the position. As the minister said, there was a contractor who was involved in the coding and then there was also a manager of the testing program who was a department employee. They were the three people who have stood down at this point. We are awaiting the Deloitte review.

Mr MANDER: Is the contractor still on full pay?

Dr Watterston: The contractor is being employed by his company, but he is not being paid by the department.

Mr MANDER: If I can come back to you, Minister, if you do not mind. Let us talk about the director-general's role in this. The director-general was the head of the department while the update was being planned, when it went live and for the ensuing six months until this failure was discovered. Does the director-general still have your full confidence?

Ms JONES: Yes. I think that the director-general and all staff who are sitting at this table worked absolutely tirelessly to ensure that when we became aware of the system failure update by the previous government in January that they have done everything in their power to fix it. At this stage we are awaiting the Deloitte review, which I have expanded to include not only the failure of the update in January but also, as you would be well aware and from your briefing, that what has become apparent through my direction to manually check all the 663 reports, to manually go through and check those, was that some also did not go through because of a firewall issue. That firewall issue dates right back to September 2013 when the decision was made by the former government to move to an online reporting system. So, you are right, honourable member, I am deeply concerned that there seems to be faults in the system from the very moment it went live in September 2013.

Mr MANDER: That has not been discovered, Minister. Those 27 reports that you subsequently found a week after the initial announcement, my understanding is that they refer to this year as well?

Ms JONES: That is not my understanding. My understanding is—and I have directed the department to go back and have a look at all reports dating back to September 2013, given that the reason those 27 reports did not go through is an issue—I am advised, that that dates back to September 2013. I think we owe it to everyone involved and all of those reports to ensure that no other reports that should have gone through since September 2013 do not make it to Child Safety or to police. I think that given the subject matter it is vital. It is a big task. I have directed officers to go back manually through all of the reports dating back to September 2013 and that information is currently with Deloitte.

Mr MANDER: Who will be made responsible for this particular issue? We have got a couple of people being made scapegoats, it seems, in the first instance. Who will be made responsible for this IT failure?

Ms JONES: I am not going to pre-empt the Deloitte report, but I think you raise a very good question in the sense that this system was a decision made right back in 2013. The change of system went live in September 2013. What we saw in January this year was an update to that system and as I have already said on the public record it is deeply concerning to me, and I imagine judging from the questions you have asked me, honourable member, that you would equally be concerned to find out today that your ministerial colleague, while he sat in this chair, did not bother to meet with the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee. The sole purpose of that committee being established was to implement the Carmody recommendations. Those Carmody recommendations were implemented by the department of education through the update in January this year and the former minister did not have the time to bother meeting with the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee once. This included not only departmental officers but also external members as well, including the other sectors of education. So, you are right. I do not want to pre-empt the Deloitte investigation and I certainly do not want to say anything that could prejudice that investigation, but I share your deep concern that there is a minister who did not bother to meet with them.

Mr MANDER: Could I just talk briefly about the Deloitte review. The terms of reference I believe say that they will examine the decisions, procedures and accountability systems in place which led to the IT failure in January. Is the Deloitte review looking into why the IT failure was not picked up after the OneSchool update in January?

Ms JONES: Absolutely.

Mr MANDER: Okay, that is great. Can you reassure the public that you will provide Deloitte with all documents relating to IT failure that have been provided to your government since 14 February 2015?

Ms JONES: I think that is a genuinely good question. I am happy to answer it in the sense that absolutely the director-general is well aware that I want to get to the bottom of this, as I believe all staff in Education Queensland do, because every single public servant that I have met or school person, and I know that the member for Townsville is a former principal, everyone who I have come across genuinely, genuinely, wants to ensure that we are providing a system which protects our children. I have written to Deloitte myself as the minister saying if there is any information that they would like from me I am happy to provide it. I am happy to have an interview. I am happy to do anything that I can to possibly assist in the investigation. I wrote to them within days of the report being announced that I would be happy to do that because if there is anything that I can add to the Deloitte investigation I am happy to do it. I have been meeting with the director-general daily on this, and officers. I am very confident that every single person in this agency is complying and providing any information they can.

CHAIR: Member for Everton, one more question before government questions.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Chair. Minister, what modifications have now been made to your daily critical incident report to ensure that child safety reports made by school principals have been acted upon?

Ms JONES: The changes that I have talked about were made immediately on the night that it was discovered that there was an issue. Officers stayed back that night to fix it. In addition to that, because they are such important matters, they also introduced manual checks. Every single day when we have the reports reported through the OneSchool system, there is a personalised check through the police, Child Safety and Education to make sure that the number of reports that leave Education Queensland are the same number of reports that are received by both police and Child Safety.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Maryborough.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, the SDS at page 7 talks about Labor's election promise to employ more teachers and guidance officers. The SDS and Budget Paper No. 3 also refer to the commitment by the government to deliver a strong capital works program. Further, the SDS and Budget Paper No. 4 advise of a significant boost to maintenance in state schools. Minister, this forecasts a considerable investment in the Queensland economy. Can you advise the committee what the job outcomes are likely to be for the state of Queensland?

Ms JONES: I think this question reflects the government's commitment to deliver jobs. That was our No. 1 priority as part of our election commitment and we are continuing to deliver that. I am very pleased to say that, in my portfolio, we are putting our money where our mouth is. You heard in my introductory remarks, and you would have heard me talking about it in parliament, that we have a record \$9 billion investment in Education. That is to employ 2,500 teachers over the next three years, including 875 teachers above growth. It is the largest additional investment in teacher numbers since the four-year, 800 additional teacher initiative commenced in 2001 under the Beattie administration which, of course, was another initiative of a Labor government.

I am also proud to talk about the money that we are investing in capital works. Even with the constrained financial environment we find ourselves in, we have committed \$456 million to support additional educational infrastructure in Queensland. Over the next three years it is expected that, through this capital works investment, 1,400 jobs will be created. Further to that, the government's commitment to invest more than three-quarters of a billion dollars to maintain our schools and to put in place a whole-of-life asset maintenance plan is also a significant jobs generator. We expect that this investment will provide employment for almost 2,400 tradespeople over the next four years.

As you heard, this is thousands and thousands of jobs being delivered through the investment we have chosen to make in the budget through Education. Over the next four years, through the investment we have decided to make through Education, we will deliver approximately 6,300 jobs. Obviously this is great news for Queensland and it is great news for Queensland business and it is great news for the students who attend our schools.

Ms PEASE: Minister, thanks very much for the information on the number of additional jobs that are to be supported out of the 2015-16 and the outyears Education budget. With reference to the SDS and teacher numbers, can you advise the committee of any reduction in the teaching workforce under the previous LNP government over the period 2012-13 to 2014-15?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question because this was an issue that came up during the election and it was also something that I have heard firsthand from principals, teachers and P&Cs in my local community. The previous government cut jobs in our schools through staffing. For example, they made a decision that they would remove the rounding benefit that had previously been provided to schools. As a former principal, Chair, you would know how important that is. That decision alone removed 185 teachers or full-time-equivalent positions from Queensland primary schools—a cut that we have pledged to rectify. Through removing the rounding benefit, 185 teachers were removed. In addition to this, I have been advised by my department that, in total, 500 teachers in the education system were removed because of policy decisions made by the previous government. This includes the removal of resource teachers in high schools, and that has seen a further 345 teachers.

What concerns me is that we had a former government that continued to maintain—despite principals, teachers and parent bodies telling us that there had been a reduction in staff—that somehow they had not cut it. So that you do not just have to take my word for it, I will call on my department. Jeff Hunt, you are probably best placed, unless the director-general wants to answer. This is also a question

that I asked when I became minister: 'The LNP claimed this right up to the election, but when I went to schools and I spoke to schools they told me that they had lost teachers. Can you please explain to me how this has occurred?' Can you talk us through the 500 reduction?

Mr Hunt: Thank you, Minister. As part of the then government's fiscal repair strategy, the department undertook some changes to the staffing allocation methodologies that were in place in the 2012 staffing model for the 2013 school year. That related to the removal of the rounding benefit for primary schools, the key teacher allocations in primary schools, some minor changes to rounding benefits in secondary schools and the removal of the resource teachers in secondary schools at the time. The approximate savings in that particular year were some 519 FTEs in the 2015 enrolment numbers. When we look at the changes that were made then, it is some 519 FTEs impact.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, I understand that the previous LNP government initiated a review of the current OP system. Can you inform the committee of the results of the review and what funds the former government set aside to initiate any proposed reforms arising out of that process?

Ms JONES: The former government initiated a review that I welcomed, and that was obviously responding to community concern with regard to the Australian Council for Educational Research report into the secondary system. The report was released in 2014, and the government's response to the report was released at the end of 2014 but, unfortunately, no funding was available to implement any of those reforms. As the minister I made it very clear that I wanted to find the best way forward, so I have had a number of consultations with the state school system, the independent school system and the Catholic school system to see what the view is with regard to change. As you have heard today, I am pleased to announce that the Palaszczuk government will introduce a new assessment and tertiary entrance system for senior students from 2018.

Mr MANDER: Thank you.

Ms JONES: I am glad that you have acknowledged that 2018 was the right date. I think that is very true, because when I listened to stakeholders a lot of them said to me that 2017 would be too rushed. As we get through this, I am happy to get Chris Rider, from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, to talk about this. The view was that, yes, we should transition to an Australian tertiary admissions rank, ATAR, which is a system that every other student in Australia is getting through senior secondary, but also that we should have a mix of both school based assessment and external assessment. There is work that we can do now to strengthen the existing school based assessment, remembering the OP system is all internal, school based assessment with the moderation of the Queensland Core Skills test, which obviously I sat in my time. This is seen as a way forward.

It is really important for this committee and, indeed, for all of us as parliamentarians who want to see this reform—and I acknowledge the bipartisan support for it—that we remind all parents and students that the OP system is working. It does work. This is about modernising a system, as you would do in any case where a system has been in place in excess of 20 years, to make sure that we are modernising it and giving our young people a contemporary score and ATAR so that they are more mobile in relation to studying interstate or overseas. Chris, is there anything you want to add at this juncture? The 2018 time frame was as a consequence of the representations made to me. It is universally welcomed by all sectors of education and universities.

Mr Rider: Thank you, Minister, and good afternoon to the committee. The committee is well aware of this topic. We talked about it some weeks ago. I think it is really important to reinforce the minister's comment about it being the current year 8s. As a committee you are well aware from the last conversation that we had that it will take us four years to do this system. Two years of preparation is required. In 2016 and 2017 we are going to have to write syllabuses for a new system and we are going to offer professional development to teachers in years 11 and 12 the length and breadth of Queensland. As you know, there are more than 16,000 teachers in Queensland right now who teach at least one senior subject. If you put those two things together—syllabuses for all of the suite of subjects that we offer in Queensland and the professional development for more than 16,000 people—there is a minimum of two years work in that preparation phase. If you think about the current year 8s, while they are in years 9 and 10 we will be preparing our teachers and our communities for a new system so that when the year 8s get into year 11 in 2018 we will be ready for them.

CHAIR: Minister, page 3 of the SDS states that the department contributes to the overall government objective of creating safe and caring communities. You have made it very clear to us this afternoon that your No. 1 priority is student safety and wellbeing. Can you please outline to us the student protection reporting procedures that are designed to protect Queensland students from harm?

Ms JONES: I have probably already answered some of this question in response to questions that have been asked of me. I reiterate as the Minister for Education that the safety and wellbeing of Queensland students is our No. 1 concern. Understanding our student protection reporting procedures and ensuring they are working is a large part of that responsibility, as is listening to stakeholders who rely on the system and procedures we have in place to report suspected cases of child abuse.

As you heard, early in my portfolio not only did I meet with my own director-general and officers of my own department but I also believed it was important for me as the Minister for Education to meet with the Minister for Communities and Minister for Child Safety and the DG of Communities, senior executives from the Queensland police and officials from the department to discuss the student protection reporting mechanism so that I had a good understanding of how it worked. At that meeting, as you have heard, I was advised that the system was working. To be completely frank with the committee, everyone in that meeting told me about how great it was working, that it was such a good system and it was working really well.

However, as you know, since September 2013 Queensland principals have reported suspected child abuse through the OneSchool online reporting system and in January it became clear that the update that was done because of the Carmody recommendations—which would require that the reporting was done in three categories: one for Child Safety only, one for police only and one for Child Safety and police—had a coding error and was not working as it should. When we started investigating those—and I am sorry, I correct this—644 cases, it also became clear that there was a fault dating right back to September 2013. Consequently, I changed the Deloitte investigation to ensure that we captured that whole window, given that the reports we are talking about relate to suspected child abuse.

CHAIR: The OneSchool update was to enact the recommendations of the Carmody report to improve child protection. How much of the \$406 million allocated by the Newman government to enact the Carmody report was the department allocated to implement these recommendations?

Ms JONES: The update occurred in January. The Child Protection Education Implementation Committee was established at the beginning of January 2014 and met consistently through 2014. I am advised that the committee met nine times to enact the Carmody recommendations but that the minister failed to meet with them once.

The Carmody report, as all members would be aware, resulted from a year-long inquiry costing Queensland taxpayers \$9 million. It was one of the former government's election commitments. In accepting the report's recommendations, the former government introduced the Child Protection Reporting Amendment Bill, which was voted on in parliament on 20 May 2014. On 1 June 2014, the then Premier announced \$406 million in landmark child protection reforms. At the time, the former Premier said –

This funding will allow us to overhaul the child protection system and help make Queensland the safest place in Australia to raise a child.

He said—

The Newman government will revitalise front-line child services by delivering a new family support service to target vulnerable families.

Education is one of the biggest reporters of suspected child abuse to Child Safety. I am advised that the only department that reports more suspected cases of child abuse is Police. That is why I was surprised, as I am sure committee members are, to learn that, of the \$460 million allocated—remembering the Carmody report was looking at the way we report child sex abuse and abuse in Queensland—not one dollar was given to the agency responsible for the second largest number of referrals to Child Safety. We saw a government which committed a lot of money but which did not direct that money to the second largest agency—after the Queensland police—responsible under the act for reporting suspected cases of abuse to Child Safety. In fact, the department had to absorb those costs to implement those reforms.

CHAIR: Given that this was being rolled out, was ICT exempt from the Newman government's whole-of-government savings strategy?

Ms JONES: No. The question is, given that the previous government had decided it would not provide any of the \$406 million to the department—the largest department outside of the Queensland police when it comes to reporting suspected child abuse to the child safety department—why did Education not get a dollar of the \$406 million? In addition, we had to absorb it in-house in an environment where we had had significant cuts to our IT team. I am advised that from June 2012 to June 2013 the number of IT staff in the department decreased by 26.7 per cent. That is a cut of 165

positions. They were removed from the IT system ahead of the decision that they would have to implement these reforms in-house. This is deeply concerning, because this was during the time the department had to move to an online solution.

CHAIR: Given that student protection reporting goes straight to the heart of creating safe, caring communities, which is mentioned on page 3 of the SDS, when did the former minister sign off on the changes to the student protection reporting procedure to ensure his department enacted that Carmody report?

Ms JONES: This is a really good question, particularly given the opening line of questioning from the honourable member for Everton. The Child Protection Reporting Amendment Act was voted on in parliament on 20 May 2014. Although the \$9 million Carmody report was one of the former government's key agenda items, I understand that the minister had not signed off on the report. I am advised that the minister did not sign off on the changes to the student protection reporting procedure, and in fact his public diaries detail the purposes of all of the meetings he held when minister. As far as I can see—and I am happy to be corrected—he did not have any meetings in relation to Carmody or to ensure his department was enacting the changes designed to protect Queensland students from harm.

As I mentioned, the department did establish the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee. This implementation committee—and I can table the terms of reference—was to lead the implementation of the Carmody recommendations. As far as I can see, the minister never met with them to be briefed on how these reforms would be implemented, on how the online system would work or on how he sought assurances that the online system implemented under his watch would work. There is not one meeting that I can see in his diary where he sought that advice.

Furthermore, in terms of the committee established through his department to implement the Carmody recommendations, the minister would know full well that he did not get any money out of the \$406 million. As minister, one would think, 'There is a recommendation that we have to implement these IT reforms. I didn't get any of the money as the Minister for Education to implement these reforms. Maybe I should ask some questions about how it will be implemented.' From what I can see, there are no meetings in the diary that substantiate the minister's doing that and, furthermore, we know that during 2014 the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee, established to assist the government—and, you would argue, the minister—in implementing these reforms, met nine times during 2015 but the minister failed to meet with them once.

Mr MANDER: I want to go back to this IT failure and particularly the minister's answer to the question about the 27 reports of suspected child abuse. I have here a press release that confirms that, after a manual check of all 3,822 OneSchool reports—they are the 3,822 reported this year—27 of those should have been provided to Child Safety. The 27 does not relate to the system before 22 January, does it?

Ms JONES: No, it was 27 this year, but we approximate in going back to 2013 that it is around 300.

Mr MANDER: So you have found another 300?

Ms JONES: We have done an initial desktop assessment to see. Be very clear: I have asked them to go through and check manually every single one to make sure. My initial advice is that it could be up to 300 dating back to September 2013.

Mr MANDER: Have you made that figure public before today?

Ms JONES: No, because we are working on it as part of Deloitte's, but I do not want to give you or the committee the impression that there are unlikely to be any dating back to September 2013 when in fact it is likely that there would have been. That is exactly what Deloitte's is looking at.

Mr MANDER: We need to talk about the 300 you have now detected. What level of risk are those children at?

Ms JONES: As I said, the taskforce is working with Child Safety and police and now manually going through those. That is exactly what is happening. We have all agencies working together to go backwards. We do not know that. That was just an initial assessment of the data, and the data was saying that there is an inconsistency, we think, of around 300.

Dr Watterston: This is very preliminary work. It is about email matching, which is an unsophisticated and not conclusive way to do this. Before we start talking about whether there are 270 reports that have not gone through, we need to confirm that they were not conveyed in a different way. There are many alternatives as to what might be the reason for those mismatches in terms of the emails

that left the department and the emails received by the police and Child Safety. There is a lot of work to be done and it is way too early to be talking about whether there are 270, but there is certainly a number. It needs to be investigated and that is why we have employed Deloittes, and they are working assiduously on a minute-by-minute basis to (a) understand what the actual number is and (b) determine the reasons they exist.

Ms JONES: For the committee's record, it is important to note that the preliminary advice is that there are likely to be other reports that did not make it through, given what we have discovered this year is that the system issue in regard to the firewall dates back to September 2013.

Mr MANDER: I suggest that this is a fairly significant piece of new information. The minister has been very transparent to date by telling us about the 3,822 and in the following week about a couple of hundred out of the 644 that she realised had not gone to Child Safety, and now there is also a further 27. Is the minister now saying that there are potentially 300 reports that did not get through to the appropriate authorities?

Ms JONES: My understanding is that, as the director-general rightly pointed out, they are manually checking all the reports dating back to September 2013, which is a substantial piece of work. When I announced that we would do that, I said that it could potentially take weeks, even months, to work through those all manually. An initial analysis of the emails found an inconsistency of around the number I have just spoken about, but it is very important to say that we cannot confirm that at this stage. I cannot confirm that that is the case. We are manually going through and checking it.

It is fair to say that, based on this advice however, it is likely that some of these reports dating back to that time may not have made it through to the authorities. Do I have confidence that, through the manual checks that are happening through our department with Child Safety and police and indeed the work that Deloittes is doing, we will get to the bottom of every single one of these reports? Yes. At this stage the director-general is right in the sense that we are working through them manually. My question was: how many others are there? How many could it be? We will be better informed once we go through those manually.

Dr Watterston: We have consulted with both the police and Child Safety and we are well aware that a number of those 270 reports have been conveyed in other ways. We do not want to catastrophise around that number. Although it is incredibly worrying to us all, there could be reasons they have not shown up in the data cross-checking.

The data from 25 September 2013 to the current time has been stored on tapes, so it takes some considerable effort to get those tapes and digitise them to go back and check conclusively. As the minister said, that will take four to six weeks, and we will have a definitive answer. The point that we want to make today to reassure people is that we are dealing with whatever could be the potential right now, so there will not be any unresolved reports still sitting out there by the time we get to the finish of the checking. We have done that work and we are erring on the side of caution. We are considering the number to be higher than it is to ensure we do in fact do the work and, to use your words, make sure there are not children who are further exposed. From that end, it is kind of a ballpark figure but one about which we really are going to check and make sure we get a conclusive result.

Mr MANDER: The 270 you are referring to is the 300 that the minister is referring to?

Dr Watterston: I said to the minister that it is around 300 but we think it is about 270. Again, we are not 100 per cent sure because it is an unsophisticated way of cross-checking the emails between what left our department and what was received.

Ms JONES: It is really important at this point also to remind the committee members that this system went live in September 2013 and at that time, clearly, the checks and balances were not put in place because otherwise we would not be having this conversation.

Mr MANDER: I am not interested in playing politics with this.

Ms JONES: I am not either. I am just saying—

Mr MANDER: You are trying to make a political statement.

Ms JONES: No, I am not. Clearly, I am saying that there is a concern for us all that when the system went live in September 2013 it could not do the job it needed to do to the level that we would expect. I was trying to say that Deloittes is looking at the whole spectrum to ensure we do get this right for the future. I was trying to say that, clearly, there is a problem here that dates back to September 2013. That is why I expanded the Deloittes investigation and why I am confident that, as part of that process, we will get to the bottom of those problems both in September 2013 and also the update in January and ensure this does not happen again in the future.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can you guarantee that the children associated with those 300-odd reports are actually safe?

Ms JONES: At the moment, as I said, we have to manually go through and check all of the reports. That is what we are doing. We are actually working through each individual report to find out exactly what report was made to whom. We are actively working through every single one of those. We are identifying what the reports are and who they relate to. That is the work that is happening. Can I say no, in the sense that we have to work through every single one of those reports, and that is what we are doing.

You are absolutely right. We have referred all of those reports to the department of child safety. I should have said that at the beginning. From the outset, as we said from day one, all of the reports that I became aware of were taken straight to Child Safety and, with our staff, they manually went through them checking them. In regard to these reports, all of them are with Child Safety and we are manually going through all of them.

I would love to sit here and say that there was a short, quick way to ensure that we could get to the bottom of each and every single one of those reports quickly, but it is an arduous process. We are talking about thousands and thousands of reports over that time frame, dating back to September 2013. What I was trying to say before is that if there had not been a problem in September 2013 which we have now discovered then we would not have to manually go through and check thousands of reports. But we are, remembering as I said, Education Queensland is the second highest referrer to Child Safety outside the Queensland police. So it is a big job. I am not going to make short cuts. I am going to do it, as I am sure all of my staff want to do it, in a thorough way.

Mr MANDER: Minister, you are the Minister for Education and the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Small Business and the Commonwealth Games. Which one of these many responsibilities has the highest priority for you?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, can you explain to the committee how your question is relevant in the consideration of the budget estimates?

Mr MANDER: Page 3 of the SDS talks about the service delivery of education, Mr Chairman, which takes up nearly 20 per cent of the budget. I think it is a fair and reasonable question to ask the minister out of her many responsibilities what area she gives the highest priority to.

Ms JONES: I am the minister—

CHAIR: Only if you are happy because I still see—

Ms JONES: Yes, I am happy to because I think there is a really big contrast between me and the former minister for education. That was a very political question. I am happy to give you a very political answer back. As the minister for the portfolios that you have listed, I take all of my responsibilities extremely seriously. I think I have demonstrated that clearly today. Can I make a clear contrast between me and the former minister for education in this regard? The former minister for education did not have time to meet with the child protection education implementation committee, even though it met nine times during 2014. Yet he was able to find time to meet with Santo Santoro three times.

So what I say to the committee is: as a minister, you have an obligation to ensure that the time that you spend as a minister is allocated to the highest need. In the last six months of Mr Langbroek's time as education minister he went to 20 schools. When you look at my diaries—and clearly you have looked at them—you will see that I have already been to 56 schools in the same amount of time. Am I able to deliver in all of my priority areas? Absolutely. Would I as a minister have prioritised meeting with the child protection education implementation committee over meeting with Santo Santoro? Absolutely.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can you give us a ballpark figure, if you do not mind, of what percentage of time you would devote to education each week? I know it varies, but if you could give a ballpark figure.

Ms JONES: Once again—

CHAIR: Member for Everton, before you answer—

Ms JONES: I am happy to answer anything.

CHAIR: In terms of the relevance of the question, I cannot see the question relating to budget estimates.

Mr MANDER: The relevance of the question, Mr Chairman, is about the minister's ability to carry out the responsibilities of the department considering that she has so many other responsibilities. I think it is a fair question.

Ms JONES: I am surprised you have waited until this afternoon for this question. You could have had four other shadow ministers ask me this, but they obviously do not share your concerns.

Mr MANDER: I think it is a fair question to ask the minister how much time she spends in oversight of the education department.

CHAIR: Again, member for Everton, under standing order 181, I do not see the relevance of this with regard to the budget estimates.

Mr MANDER: Let me put it a different way then. I have gone through your diaries.

Ms JONES: You obviously have time to burn.

Mr MANDER: From February to June you have had 355 meetings—

Ms JONES: See, I am a busy girl!

Mr MANDER:—and 136 of those have been related to education. So 38.31 per cent of your meetings relate to education, although education is \$9 billion of the state budget compared to the rest of your responsibilities of just \$205 million. Education makes up 98 per cent of your portfolio's budget, but by your own diaries only 38.3 per cent of your meetings have related to education. Surely that is not devoting the appropriate amount—

Ms JONES: Have you looked at the time allocated? If you want to know, I am happy to answer this question but it just highlights—

Mr MANDER: Let me finish the question.

Ms JONES: No. Well your question is—

Mr MANDER: No. I am asking the questions, not you. Is that an appropriate amount of time given to a portfolio of such significance?

Ms JONES: And I repeat that, as the minister, I am confident that I am doing everything to deliver a good education system here in Queensland. Let's talk about that. Let's bring it back to the budget. What was I able to achieve in my first budget? A \$9 billion record investment in education. Maybe I am moving too swiftly for the honourable member, but already in my first six months I have delivered a \$9 billion investment in education—the largest record investment in education we have seen in Queensland. In addition to that, I have delivered a record investment in tourism. I am getting on with the job.

I think you are right in the sense that you had a minister for education that did not have the responsibilities that I have and still he could not make time to meet with the child protection education implementation committee. Yet he prioritised a meeting with Santo Santoro three times. Can I assure every single Queenslander that when I make decisions about my allocation of time and where I need to be I will always act in the best interests of the people that I am representing.

As someone who has very strong relationships with schools, someone who is very proud to be a supporter of teachers and principals in schools, I ask the honourable shadow minister that if he is so concerned why does he not talk to the principals association of Queensland and why does he not talk to the teachers of Queensland to see whether they are disappointed by the record investment in education or indeed the time that I have provided to meeting with them? What we saw under the previous minister was key stakeholders locked out from meeting with him. So I say to you that, if you think that the previous minister's prioritisation of Santo Santoro was a demonstration that he was a good education minister, I rest my case.

Mr MANDER: Minister, according to your diary, you have met with the DG and senior education department staff on 36 occasions between February and June. Minister, how do you justify meeting on average only twice a week in the area of education that is responsible for 20 per cent of the state budget, 100,000 registered teachers, 1,700 schools and the education and welfare of 770,000 children?

Ms JONES: That is because I am out visiting schools. As you have just heard, I in the first six months of my ministerial portfolio have gone to more schools—more than double the number—than John-Paul Langbroek did in the last six months of his time being the education minister. I am happy to

throw to the DG. I think the question goes to the heart of whether you get to see me enough, Director-General. I do not know if you have been to the education minister's office, but we have a door directly linking our offices. We are on the phone. If I am on the road or at a school, it does not mean that I am not talking to my director-general. Director-General, do you feel that you do not get to see me enough?

Dr Watterston: Just to be clear, I would speak to the minister 20 times a week, I am sure. We do meet on a regular basis.

Ms JONES: We talk daily.

Dr Watterston: Ten o'clock last night.

Ms JONES: They all have to work to my hours.

Mr MANDER: Minister—

CHAIR: This is your last question, member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Minister, would you agree though that, if education was your only portfolio responsibility and given the attention it deserves, you would actually have more contact with principals, not schools—the number of principals—and therefore more likely to have this child safety IT failure brought to your attention?

Ms JONES: Can I ask you a question? Have you been listening at all to the conversation that has been happening? Come on!

Mr MANDER: It is not a dream. You are the minister and you are here answering the questions at the estimates hearing. It is a pretty simple question.

Ms JONES: Fair enough. I would say to you, as I have demonstrated, that I have met with principals consistently. Numerous principals have my mobile number, for example. I talk to principals all of the time. What did I hear from principals? I heard from principals that they thought the system was working. Why did they think that? Because they were getting emails from the OneSchool system telling them that the report had gone through.

Mr MANDER: One principal did not think it was working, thank goodness. Had you met more principals you would have been more likely to come across some oversight of the system.

CHAIR: We will move on to government questions.

Ms JONES: I just reiterate that I have been to twice the number of schools that the former minister went to. I am absolutely confident that I am talking to schools all the time including the principals association.

CHAIR: I have a question for the director-general. Director-General, page 3 of the SDS says the department contributes to the overall government objectives of creating safe and caring communities. Did the former minister for education ever consult with stakeholders on student protection reporting and did they provide any feedback and what was the department's view on these changes?

Dr Watterston: Thank you for the question. Can I start by reiterating that for us the child protection failure or problem has been a failure and a problem around student safety and welfare. We are not treating this as an IT issue. This is way bigger than an IT problem. As the minister has reiterated a number of times, there is nothing more serious in our department than the wellbeing of our most important resources, and that is our 520,000 students. So this is a devastating impact on all of us.

As you heard from the minister, we set up a child protection implementation committee to support the safety and protection of students. That committee was an intersectoral committee, which comprised Queensland Catholic Education Commission, Independent Schools Queensland and the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services. We had the key stakeholders in terms of who we were reporting to and who we were working with to make sure that the recommendations from the Carmody report were implemented.

You need to be aware that, prior to 25 September 2013, schools right across the state were reporting to the police and Child Safety by fax. The system was in place, but we were really working hard to make sure that we could implement those recommendations in a way that would give greater security to the children that we were charged with looking after.

As the minister said, the committee met eight times or more—nine times between January 2014 and April 2015—to talk about child protection reforms, legislative changes, training for all parts of the education sector and the development of information resources. The committee itself did express some concerns, and certainly they were led by Mike Byrne from the Catholic Education Commission, about

the time line and that was documented at the time. The time line was more about making sure that teachers and stakeholders were ready to be able to take on the new thresholds of reporting. You have to understand that as teachers—and I am sure, Chair, you do—it is an onerous responsibility for teachers and principals to make a report under the mandatory reporting legislation about student abuse or sexual abuse. So for teachers to be aware of those increased responsibilities and the wider reporting remit that they had, we did have to work hard to get the resources ready and put in place in time. But we did feel that that was achieved.

CHAIR: I call the member for Lytton.

Ms PEASE: Minister, I was wondering if you could advise how much the Deloitte investigation is costing the department.

Ms JONES: Thank you and that is a good question. I am proud to be part of a government, as you heard, that has delivered a record investment in education. As I said, with this funding we have been delivering an additional 2,500 teachers, three-quarters of a billion dollars in regard to maintenance and \$456 million capital works. Every dollar of funding is precious and must be carefully considered when you are delivering education in our schools. As I said from the outset, we know—as I am sure does everybody who is motivated to work in education—that investment in education means transformation for children's lives.

I have been advised that the OneSchool update that failed in January this year and resulted in 644 cases of suspected child abuse not being reported to police cost the department approximately \$25,000 when it was implemented. Yet I can advise the committee to date that the Deloitte investigation at this stage is going to cost \$1 million. That is primarily because we have had to expand it, given that we have become aware of the problem that dates back to September 2013. Through this process, as we have articulated here this afternoon, we know that not only was there a failure of the update for the Carmody recommendations that happened in January but also there are problems that potentially date back to September 2013. To ensure that we get to the bottom of this—and I do think that, whilst it is money that we would have obviously preferred to put into educational resources—given the public responsibility we have for child safety, it is important that we provide Deloitte with the opportunity to look at everything.

As I have already answered in response to a previous question, I am confident that as the minister—and all of our public servants who have been involved—the Deloitte investigation is getting full access to all the information and access to our employees. It is a substantial cost, but it is one, to be honest with you, that we have to spend. But of course it is regrettable that we are in this position.

Ms PEASE: Minister, page 7 of the SDS makes reference to the commitment to a significant investment for maintenance to maintain the building assets in Queensland schools. How many schools and approximately how many buildings need to be maintained? Can you inform the committee how the 2015-16 allocation will be delivered to schools and any subprograms that will target specific areas?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. As I said in my opening address, there are more than 1,234 schools in Queensland comprising approximately 18,000 buildings that include more than 32,000 classrooms. We will invest \$763.3 million over four years—more than three-quarters of a billion dollars—to support our schools. It will begin with \$178 million in funding this financial year. This also includes a one-off \$10 million investment in improvements to state special school facilities. This fund has provided a boost to 19 special schools and 13 state school special education program facilities. I note that the honourable member is nodding. I know this is an area she is passionate about—ensuring that all students get access to their schools in the best possible way. This includes work in the Albert electorate at the Oxenford State School to refurbish toilet amenities and at Mount Warren Park State School to provide handrails and access works. In the electorate of Maryborough we will be rectifying fencing at the Maryborough Special School. There you go, honourable member for Maryborough. In Toowoomba North at the Toowoomba West Special School we will be providing a major revamp to teaching areas and at the Wilsonton State School an upgrade to the special education unit. In Mount Isa at the Mount Isa State Special School a covered outdoor play area and replacement of shade sails and flooring will be provided through this additional investment.

Our commitment also includes a \$4 million investment in tuckshops in Queensland's Indigenous communities. I acknowledge that we need to see an investment in regard to this. Schools to benefit include Woorabinda State School in the Gregory electorate, Cherbourg State School in the Callide electorate; Doomadgee and Mornington Island state schools in the Mount Isa electorate; Badu Island, Kubin, Darnley Island and Yorke Island campuses of the Tagai State College; and the Kowanyama State School in the electorate of Cook—so all of those Indigenous communities right through the electorate of Cook.

Despite what the former LNP government said leading into the election, when I became the minister I was briefed in regard to maintenance. As I have said previously in the parliament, there was still a \$260 million backlog of maintenance works. I acknowledge that they did invest additional funding into maintenance, which was a good thing, and I continue that with our investment in maintenance of three-quarters of a billion dollars. What concerns me is that this money was thrown at the issue, but it was a quick fix. There were no long-term planning changes to ensure that we got the best bang for the buck, not only in educational outcomes for our schools but also for the taxpayer.

One of the things I am very pleased to report on, and I have previously given some information to the parliament during question time and in ministerial statements, is that we need to use our maintenance funding in a smarter way. That is why we are looking at new long-term solutions. I have been working with our department in regard to some of those issues like life-cycle maintenance, which I am happy to go into more detail about.

Ms PEASE: Thank you, Minister. You just mentioned some long-term solutions. Can you please provide some advice to the committee on how this will work?

Ms JONES: I think this is a really exciting piece of work. Given what we have seen federally with the federal government walking away from the long-held position that we should fund education at the education index and not at CPI, which they first introduced in their budget last year and have reiterated in their budget this year, what we are seeing in the pipeline from the federal government is their walking away from funding schools in Queensland. That is very concerning to me. They are laughing over there, but I am very concerned about the funding cuts by the Abbott government.

Given these funding constraints, I think it is prudent to look at a holistic, long-term plan for maintenance. We are looking to the future when considering maintenance and how it is required over the next 10 years. Preapproved contractors will be able to tender for this work. We will prioritise contractors from regions where the work is needed. One of the reasons I know I was able to secure so much additional funding in the budget was the job benefits I talked about in my opening statement. Investing in infrastructure that we own generates jobs, particularly in small regional communities.

We are determined to ensure Queensland schools are modern learning environments. The Queensland Audit Office report found that the department had been locked in a cycle of reactive maintenance. Schools were considering their maintenance in isolation and it was not viewed alongside renewals. My view is that we need to be smarter about how we are doing that. Rather than looking at what immediately needs to be repaired, we are now looking to the future to consider the maintenance and repair needs over 10 years at a school so we can pull together the contracts that are required, bundle that work up and offer it to contractors. We are also doing this in a clustering model. So we go to schools in a region where you do the asset life-cycle assessment and you pull together what is required in the neighbouring schools. For a carpenter, there is this amount of work at these five schools and they have the confidence to bid for that work and hopefully put on additional staff and trainees because they know they can do that.

I had a very good conversation with the principal of Roma when I called from my electorate office in regard to the integrated maintenance trial that is happening at his school. We are going to meet again as a consequence of this conversation because I wanted to hear from him directly about how he thought the trial was going. He was over the moon with excitement about what it meant to him. He said that, working in collaboration with Building and Asset Services, the college was able for the first time to not just look at the maintenance work that needs to happen in a reactionary way but to have the money up-front through maintenance funding, have the assessment done and say, 'How can I spend this money to deliver better educational outcomes, not just improvements to the bricks and mortar?' He was very excited about that. I am going to meet with him in person very soon. He has been developing a strategy that allows for a long-term focus in improving learning spaces in infrastructure. That is because we have the guarantee of funding under this maintenance funding for four years. He knows now what funding he will get for four years, and he is able to start making smarter choices about where his maintenance dollars should go. In his own words, he said that for the first time he has been able to look at educational outcomes as well as outcomes for the school.

Ms PEASE: Further to that, could you explain how the whole-of-life-cycle assessment for infrastructure is different from the school condition assessments that have been in place in previous years?

Ms JONES: As I was just saying, instead of going in with a checklist to check if there is a chip of paint here or there—and I see that the member for Townsville is nodding—this is asking our schools what needs to happen over the next 10 years over the asset life cycle and how to prioritise that work. So we do that for a school and then, in addition, for schools around the area. Then we bundle up that work. So in places like the Toowoomba South electorate, for example, they are able to bid with certainty for the funding. They know how much money will be allocated in a region. A carpenter, a painter or an electrician can bid for a bigger bundle of work as they know they will have the security of that funding coming forward. They can enter into a long-term contract instead of one-off contracts. They will know they have guaranteed funding in regard to work in schools in Toowoomba, for example. A number of trials are happening across the state, and I am hoping to roll that out more broadly across the state. Jeff, I do not know whether you want to add to that? He is a bit excited. He gets excited about this, too.

Mr Hunt: Thank you, Minister. Did you mention the Cairns trial?

Ms JONES: I did not get to Cairns.

Mr Hunt: Okay. This is an exciting development for us in terms of the whole question of over-the-horizon funding for schools. Too often in the past we have gone hand to mouth with funding, particularly for maintenance. Again, this initiative gives us a four-year horizon which gives schools an opportunity to plan over the long term for their maintenance needs. As the minister said, bundling this work with renewal is the key part. Members will know that there are a lot of tin and timber schools across Queensland that are heavy on maintenance and maybe built well before the last century as opposed to during the last century, and we want to make sure that those learning spaces are contemporary. That means wiring, cabling and being technology focused as well as the right spaces with different types of learning modes that teachers are wanting in the 21st century. There is a challenge for us to make sure that we get all of that information in and sorted and work with the schools to deliver the right sort of maintenance and renewal program.

Those are the things that we are working with schools on. At Cairns West we are working with the school to refurbish a whole block and make sure that classrooms are contemporary, that they are right in terms of technology demands, that the cabling, wiring and smart boards are all part of the development program over the life cycle of that asset. We are trying to future-proof those buildings as well for the support that teachers in the modern age need. That goes to working with our partners in Building and Asset Services, working with the school community, working with P&Cs Queensland and our principals associations to make sure that the work being undertaken is meeting all the needs of our school communities.

I think we will all admit that there will never be enough. We will always have more demands. So we will prioritise the work in particular schools that need this money most and work with them in a productive way to deliver the built asset environment that kids today need to learn in.

Mr SAUNDERS: Page 8 of the SDS provides a lot of data around the NAPLAN performance of our years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in 2014. I am aware that there is now preliminary data for the 2015 tests. Can the minister inform the committee how Queensland has performed in both a state and a national context?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question. This year more than 240,000 young Queenslanders sat the NAPLAN assessment. Firstly, I want to pay tribute to the principals and teachers for the work they do to enable this to happen in our schools. The support for all Queensland students has been particularly evident over the last eight years of this assessment process. We have seen continuous improvement here in Queensland. Queensland is by far the state that stands out when it comes to continuous improvement. While we have seen other states—I do not want to say stagnate—not see the growth that we have seen in improvement, we are continuing to see that improvement here. That really is a tribute to our great staff who are working in our schools and delivering on that.

In the 2015 results Queensland has recorded some of its best results in NAPLAN, particularly in regard to literacy and numeracy, in its eight-year history. As I said, it is a stand-out amongst its interstate competitors. The introduction of prep by the government, as I have mentioned, has driven a lot of this improvement, as we suspected it would. All the evidence demonstrated, as it continues to do, that if you invest in the early years of learning you get much better outcomes throughout. I think there has been bipartisan support for these reforms. They are now starting to pay dividends in terms of the quality of education that has been provided with the work of our teachers and staff. I think this can only be enhanced by the move of year 7 into high school this year, for the first time having year 7 students with access to specialist teachers in key areas such as maths and English.

Since the beginning of testing, as I said, Queensland schools have demonstrated the greatest improvement. Our years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students have improved in 18 out of the 20 different areas of achievement. This really is a credit to all of them. Year 3 has seen the greatest improvement in grammar, punctuation and reading. Year 5 has seen the greatest improving in reading and spelling. Year 7 has seen the greatest improvement in spelling, grammar and punctuation. Year 9 students saw some improvements in numeracy and spelling. In fact, in year 7 numeracy, the mean score has shown improvement nationally, from fifth to second this year. So there has been a significant jump with regard to the achievement we are seeing in year 7. I should acknowledge and thank all of the staff, particularly the primary school staff, who helped with the education of those students and with their transition to year 7 successfully. In year 9 spelling has gone from fifth to third and year 9 numeracy from fifth to second.

I mention this today because this is something to celebrate and acknowledge. Of course there is more work to do. We will continue to work with our schools, our teachers and our staff to make sure that we continue to do that. It is important that we acknowledge the work that has been done to date and also to say that, of course, NAPLAN is not the be-all and end-all. It is one measure that complements the work that happens in our schools every day. I want to acknowledge the work that has been done to release these results closer to the release of students' report cards. Having both the NAPLAN results and student report cards released close together gives parents a much broader understanding of how their child is going. There are very exciting reforms there. I want to finish by acknowledging everybody who has been involved in achieving that.

CHAIR: I now call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: It is good to hear that the reforms that I brought in as the Minister for Housing and Public Works are working well with regard to the bundling of work and far better management of assets. Minister, I refer to page 7 of the SDS where it talks about 45 new guidance officers, which will increase counselling services for Queensland state high schools. Minister, can you advise whether these new guidance officers are going to be involved in the rollout of the program that is offered by the Safe Schools Coalition?

Ms JONES: I am very pleased to report to the committee that, as part of our election commitment, we are delivering 45 additional guidance officers to our high schools. This is in recognition of the fact that the key feedback that the honourable Premier heard when she was opposition leader was that there was increasing concern in the community about the tension that young people are under, both in regard to achieving in school and living in a complex world. I often say that I do not know if I would want to be a teenager today compared to the time that I was a teenager. In recognition of that, we want to see the best results for our students, which I have reiterated time and time again and these guidance officers will do that.

With regard to the Safe Schools Coalition, which is the federal government funded program you are talking about, as you know, the Australian government has resourced this program. As an election commitment the Palaszczuk government said that it is committed to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn in a safe and supportive environment. We have said that this resource is available for schools if and when they want it.

Mr MANDER: Like you, I actually commend the Safe Schools Coalition on their motives to stop bullying at school. I have met with them and they are very well intentioned people. I do have some concerns though about some of the content on the website that they heavily promote through their resource materials. The Minus18 website provides a 'super, useful guide on how to bind safely'. The guide, which is called 'Healthier and safer ways to bind your chest' advises—

Because you are compressing tissue, it can cause damage and potentially even breakages to your ribs if done improperly, if things go wrong with your ribs, it has the potential to be lethal.

I seek leave to table the document that refers to these for the committee members.

CHAIR: Leave is granted. Just before you go on, member for Everton, I remind you that under standing order 115 you are to ask the questions and not make a speech.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. I will do that now, Mr Chair. Minister, my question is: what child protection measures have you put into place to ensure that Queensland schoolchildren, some as young as 12 who are encouraged to go to this site, do not cause serious harm to themselves?

Ms JONES: I accept the honourable member's question. As I said, the Safe Schools Coalition resource is funded and approved by the Abbott government, the Australian government, in Queensland. I understand that a number of schools have asked whether they can have access to this material in

Queensland. The Palaszczuk government has said that it is the principal's decision. As we saw when you were in government—and we also believe—principals are best placed to make decisions about what kind of information and resources they want available to their students. With regard to the Safe Schools Coalition, the resource that is funded and approved by the federal government, I have said publicly before now that it is a principal's decision how and which of the resources from the Safe Schools Coalition they would like implemented in their school.

Mr MANDER: I agree again with the principles behind the Safe Schools Coalition, but my question is quite specific. This website that is heavily referred to in the resources—and I have seen the resources myself—gives advice on a practice which it itself says has the potential to be lethal. So given that the safety of our children is your highest priority, my question is: how do we ensure in schools that we have the appropriate mechanisms in place to protect our children?

Ms JONES: As I said, I am happy to have a look at that issue. The reason we have enabled these Australian funded government resources—and I do not know whether you have taken it up with your federal government colleagues—

Mr MANDER: Yes, we are. This was introduced by the Rudd government before the Abbott government—

Ms JONES: And it has continued to be resourced and funded by the current Australian government.

Mr MANDER: Yes, I am not denying that.

Ms JONES: No, I am not saying you are. I am just saying have you taken it up with them, given that it is an Australian government resource?

Mr MANDER: The question is to you about—

Ms JONES: And my answer to you is that I am happy to have a look at that. But, as I said, the decision regarding the resources that are available to students in our schools—because I have listened to principals and principals have advised me that they want to have the autonomy to make decisions about how they implement resources in their schools—rests with principals. So I expect that some principals will want to use some of the Safe Schools Coalition material, particularly if there are children in their community they are concerned about with regard to bullying, as you said in your introductory remarks, to make a safe and supportive environment. Other principals will find that these resources are not relevant to them. As I have said repeatedly and publicly previously, it is my view that principals are best placed to decide what resources they make available to their schools.

Mr MANDER: So, Minister, you are not uncomfortable with that particular advice and practice for children as young as 12 years of age?

Ms JONES: To be honest, I have had other issues raised with me, but not this one. I am happy to have a look at it. Most principals, in my experience—I do not know if you have had a different experience—will always act in the best interests of their students. Do I have faith that they will make good decisions about the safety of their students? Yes. I am looking at that. I am happy to have a look specifically with regards to that. Do you have anything to say as the head of state schooling, Ms Walton? I am happy to have a look at that. With regard to the actual rollout of the Safe Schools Coalition's materials, which is funded by the Australian government, we have said that where principals want to implement it, they can, but it is a school based decision.

Mr MANDER: Further to that, one of the other references in this website actually says to the students that the IT filters in the school might block access. They recommend that they go to the school authorities to make sure that these filters can be overridden. Is it an appropriate bit of advice to give a school student as young as 12 to seek to override the filters that we put in place to protect our children?

Ms JONES: What are you reading from?

Mr MANDER: One of the resources. I can table that.

Ms JONES: Okay, thank you. While you are doing that, Patrea, do you want to say something? Just so you know, Patrea and I have had a number of conversations because people have raised with me concerns about some of the material in the Safe Schools Coalition. As you know, Wendy Francis is a member of my community. I know that she knows you as well. She lives in my electorate. So I have spoken directly with her about that. I said to her at the meeting that I am happy to look at some of the materials. I had that conversation with Patrea, who is the responsible officer. I will check the date on this one because I know that the advice I have received is that the Safe Schools Coalition have changed some of their resources because they have listened to community concern. They may have said that at the briefing that you were in. Did you raise with them your concerns about that particular bit?

Mr MANDER: I have written to them. I have met with them as well and you are right—

Ms JONES: I know you did. I was just wondering whether you had raised it. If you are genuinely concerned about children's wellbeing, did you raise this with them? You might be more up to date on that than me.

Mr MANDER: I think I probably am. They have made modifications to their material which I commend—

Ms JONES: Exactly. So my understanding is they made modifications.

Mr MANDER: The problem is not the material. The material heavily promotes a website. It is mentioned quite frequently. It is called the Minus18 website. All the material that they have removed from the booklets is still available on that website. Again, it is more about child protection issues. I am quite concerned that they would recommend that IT filters be, if you like, weakened so that people can get access to information which many parents would think would be inappropriate and particularly the practices which they themselves have said could be lethal if not done properly. I think the question—

Ms JONES: Okay, you have said it three times. Can I just be clear? Did people say to us during the election that they wanted to have Safe Schools Coalition materials available to them in their schools? Yes. Principals lobbied the former government and have, indeed, said to me that they want some of these materials available in their schools. They have also said as principals they act in the best interests of the schools to ensure that every single child—no matter how they identify, whether that be lesbian, gay or any student—every student has the right to feel safe in a school environment. If there are ways that we can support principals to ensure that every single student feels safe in our schools, of course I am going to look at that. I am sure any education minister would go out of their way to ensure that—

Mr MANDER: Minister, you were not aware of those things till they were brought to your attention.

Ms JONES: No, I was aware of a number of concerns. This is the first one I have seen about the binding. I just spoke to you about how I met with Wendy Francis and she raised a number of the concerns that you are raising here. I stated that I followed that up by meeting with Patrea and talking her through some of those changes where I was advised, as you were advised, that the Safe Schools Coalition had made some modifications to their materials. Can I make this very clear? Principals are calling out for materials which help them to ensure that all students in our schools feel safe. The Australian government has created this resource. They have funded this resource. Principals have come to the government and asked: can we have access to these resources? Similar to what the previous government did, we have said to principals that if you want to access this resource developed by the federal government, then that is the decision of the principal. I will allow Patrea to answer at this point because I think that you would also have something valuable to add in this regard.

Ms Walton: Firstly, I just want to make very clear that the program is being provided to secondary schools. Ultimately, as with any other program provider out there, it is the decision of the principal in consultation with the school community. Whether it is a program provided by the Safe Schools Coalition or any other provider, particularly in that social wellbeing space—and there a lot of the providers in the marketplace around that—that is a school based decision. Some of the references that have been made here today do apply to earlier additions. Certainly we have a small number of schools that have indicated some interest in the program. The advice that we have provided to those principals is to consult with their school community around whether they want the providers to provide the program in the school. Certainly can I say that any attempts to breach firewalls or so on is totally unacceptable. There have been no requests made to me regarding that matter, nor has that been raised with me regarding that matter. However, the Department of Education and Training is the provider of education for all students regardless of race, creed or sexual identity. Last year we put out some advice to schools around how to support diversity in our schools and that was well received by principals.

Certainly the requests are ongoing from schools for further information on how to best support students in our schools, and this program does provide the opportunity for schools to consider—Catholic, state and independent; it is not just restricted to state schools—whether they wish to implement the program. We have certainly been encouraging school principals, who are the decision-makers around such programs, to consult heavily with their parent communities.

Ms JONES: Just to put this in context, too, you receive lots of representations from different cross-sections of our community about what should or should not be available in schools. I am sure the honourable member is aware that as minister for education you often get correspondence saying that we should not allow chaplains or religious instruction in our schools. All of these are things that people have very strong opinions on.

That is why similarly across-the-board what we have decided, and I support, is that where schools are best placed in their local setting with the principal and the local community to determine what information and what resources should be available to their students, I am confident that that is a strong enough safeguard for our students. We were talking earlier about meeting with principals. In the meetings that I have had with principals they consistently take the safety and security of their students very seriously. I am confident that they will always make the right decision for the students in their schools.

Mr MANDER: I direct my comments to the deputy director-general. I could not agree more about the fact that of course no single student in our schools should be harassed, bullied or discriminated against because of gender, race, faith or whatever. Nobody disagrees with that. I suspect that the reason you have not received any comments about this is because the program is yet to be rolled out. The resources are about to go out. Yes, there have been modifications—

CHAIR: Member for Everton, what is your question, please?

Mr MANDER: I take your point. Minister, I hope that you go away from this and that you investigate this and make sure that our principals are resourced to—

CHAIR: Member, again what is your question, please?

Mr MANDER: Yes. Will you assure us that you will go away from this meeting and investigate this further and make sure that the appropriate safety mechanisms are put in place to protect children from what potentially could be unsafe practices?

Ms JONES: I am happy to do that. But as I have consistently said from day one, principals will determine what resources are available in their schools. I am happy to have a look at this. As I think Patrea said in her answer, my understanding is that there have been changes to the Safe School Coalition materials. As I have said to people that have made representations to me, I am happy to have a look at any of those concerns but I do believe that our principals are best placed to determine what is the right thing to be taught in their schools.

Mr MANDER: Minister, since you have been returned to government have you reintroduced union inclusion as part of a school principal selection panel?

Ms JONES: Yes, we have. We did that because we believe that the Teachers' Union is a really key stakeholder in our state, representing more than 93 per cent of the teachers and I believe it is even higher for principals. I think around 97 per cent of principals are members of the Teachers' Union in Queensland. When we talked about the Child Protection Education Implementation Committee, the Teachers' Union was not on that implementation committee. Going to your question, maybe if the Teachers' Union had been on that committee they would have received more frank advice from the teachers who are working in our schools and living and breathing these issues daily.

The Queensland Teachers' Union will also be on the implementation task force for the rollout of changes to the senior secondary assessment. Why? Because who is going to have to do the heavy lifting when it comes to the curriculum reforms that Chris spoke about earlier in his comments? It is the teachers in our schools. Do I feel that, as the Minister for Education in a state where 93 per cent of the teachers that teach in our schools are members of the Teachers' Union, it is appropriate for me to work with them and talk with them? Absolutely. I believe that is fundamental. Do teachers that I have spoken to have concerns about me meeting with the Teachers' Union? None that I have come across. I am sure there are a couple there, but overwhelmingly the feedback I receive when I go to schools is that they are pleased. I note that the opposition continues to demonise unions, but can I say that the Teachers' Union give very good frank and fearless advice about the implementation processes of our government, and I take their advice.

Mr MANDER: They do not give advice; they give instruction, Minister.

Ms JONES: No, they do not give instruction.

Mr MANDER: I am only quoting Martin Ferguson from last night, who says that most Labor MPs wait by their phones for union leaders to advise their ministers about what should happen.

Ms JONES: What does Martin Ferguson have to do with me? What you have just highlighted is that you are happy to bash unions. I hope the Teachers' Union is listening.

CHAIR: Order! We are not here to debate. According to the clock we have run out of time for this session. We will adjourn for afternoon tea. The hearing will resume at 4 pm and continue with the examination of the estimates of the Education portfolio.

Proceedings suspended from 3.34 pm to 4.00 pm

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now continue with the examination of the estimates for the Education portfolio.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, there seems to be a reluctance by a small number of parents to have their children take part in the national assessment program. Can you address the issues of the Queensland NAPLAN withdrawal rates?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable for the question. Yes, there is. It is something that I am watching very closely as the minister. While the 2015 participation rate for students in years 3, 5 and 9 remains largely consistent with 2014, there is a slight decrease in year 7. Since 2008, however, participation rates have fallen between four per cent and six per cent. This is largely due to concerning statistics of withdrawal rates where parents actively decide that their child will not take part in the assessment. We have seen this grow from a low of around one per cent to 1.5 per cent in 2011 and from four to five per cent in 2015.

This means that parents are making the decision to deny their children the opportunity to participate in what really is a diagnostic tool with regard to NAPLAN. As we have talked about already today at length, and what principals and teachers tell you, is that the NAPLAN data should not be seen as an individual result of that student alone. It is about saying where we are as a state, a class and a student. How can we ensure the funding and resources that we have available wrap around that student to ensure we are seeing continuous improvements in those keys areas of literacy, numeracy, reading and writing?

There are concerns. Speaking frankly, I know that there are some people who have been critical of NAPLAN. I think that is unhelpful in the sense that NAPLAN really has helped us with regard to where we need to put our efforts, and that is certainly the feedback I get from schools and principals. As the minister, I do think there has to be responsibility about saying that this is not the be-all and end-all. This is just a diagnostic tool that complements the work that is happening in schools. I have raised this as something I will be discussing at the Education Council meeting coming up in September. I know that the previous premier of Queensland was critical of NAPLAN and publicly spoke against NAPLAN and said that it gave misleading results. I do not think this criticism is helpful.

I think what is helpful is looking at ways that we can use the NAPLAN data to inform the decisions we make in schools regarding improvement in those areas of reading, writing, maths and spelling. That is certainly the way that we are encouraging our schools to use that data. From all the advice that I have received from school leadership, that is how they want to do it. I do not know whether you share this view, Patrea, but principals do want to see their students participating because it does help them as a school to prioritise where their investment and their learning should be.

In answer to your question, there is a slight trend there. It is very early days, but because it is happening nationally I feel there should be a national discussion about that. I will be raising that at the Education Council meeting next month.

CHAIR: What about NAPLAN online, Minister?

Ms JONES: I understand that in 2014 members of the Ministerial Education Council agreed to move forward with an implementation plan for the transition of online assessment between the years 2017 and 2019. Obviously as the minister in Queensland I want to ensure that, given the council made this decision in 2014, we are getting it right with regard to the diverse and geographically large state that we have, that we are ready to move to online testing and that all students in Queensland can benefit from this transition. I recognise that there are benefits to online technology in this area, but we need to get it right and we need to work so that no community is left behind. You have a more regional electorate, as does the member for Townsville. I did not sign up to it because I was not the minister, but I can give you the assurance that I am not going to continue with a system that is going to disadvantage any student in regional and rural communities in Queensland. My view is that every single child in Queensland deserves to be treated equally in this regard, and that is my focus.

In addition to that, the Department of Education and Training is running a pilot of the NAPLAN online assessment solution to gain a better understanding about the issues associated with implementation to test the delivery, including training and supervisory costs, and the practicality of how we would deliver an online system here in Queensland given the constraints and concerns that I raised earlier. We are proposing to undertake a limited trial of the online system in 2017 when the full NAPLAN online platform is scheduled to become available.

I know from the discussions I have had with schools, having travelled across Queensland, that this is something people are interested in. They see merit in it. Obviously there are some questions about its implementation, but the Queensland government believes that we need to conduct a number of examples and tests to make sure that we can deliver it in a way in Queensland that does not disadvantage any of our students across our state.

Ms PEASE: Minister, page 8 of the SDS refers to state schooling statistics, including advice on Indigenous education. Given Queensland is second only to New South Wales in the number of enrolled Indigenous students within our system, what is the government doing to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the question and for the opportunity today at the estimates hearing to talk about some of the key government commitments across this area, particularly within early education, school education and training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in this state.

We are absolutely committed to improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and will continue to progress towards closing the achievement gap that we have seen traditionally between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. We know that a high-quality education sets people up for success and is crucial to closing the gap for Indigenous people and non-Indigenous people. As the education minister I am dedicated to ensuring they have access to high-quality education that will do just that. That is why in this year's budget we committed over \$54 million for Indigenous education programs.

The focus of this funding is to lift attendance rates in schools, helping students transition into further study, employment or apprenticeships after school, creating pathways, improving literacy and numeracy and also increasing participation in our kindergarten programs. I am sure all members of this committee recognise that having access to early education and learning is one of the key indicators of the ultimate success of any child through their school years. Closing the gap in kindergarten attendance between non-Indigenous and Indigenous people in Queensland is one of the things we are keen to focus on.

Research has shown that school attendance is intrinsically linked to improved student outcomes. The attendance data for Indigenous students in Queensland state schools for semester 1 in 2004 shows that there is a positive increase in attendance rates. We have seen this consistently from 2013-14. The preliminary data we have available for 2015 shows that this trend is continuing, so the measures we have put in place over many years are now starting to derive some results. The department is working very closely with the Australian government through the Remote Schools Attendance Strategy to place attendance officers in 12 communities with the aim of further improvements to Indigenous students' attendance.

A principal coach for Indigenous community schools has also been appointed and works closely with our school principals in communities such as Yarrabah, Lockhart River, Kowanyama, Pormpuraaw and Bloomfield River state schools to monitor and refine practice to teaching and learning and strategies to improve community engagement and school attendance. In term 4 of this year we will also introduce the role of master teachers for remote schools as a measure to support improving teacher quality for remote schools, which will in turn impact upon overall attendance rates.

Literacy and numeracy is another important part of our commitment to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and we want to continue to fund this through our programs. Since 2008 the gap in the proportion of children meeting the national minimum standards has narrowed in eight of the 12 areas assessed by NAPLAN. By making it a key focus, which has been going on for years now and which I acknowledge has continued, we are starting to see some real results in the NAPLAN data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. When you have that data it is so much easier, which is why NAPLAN was devised in the first place. I think people forget that the reason NAPLAN was developed was to support needs based education funding so that you could clearly see where the need was and decide where to allocate your funding to address that need. We can see here that having strong measures through NAPLAN in our Indigenous communities is enabling us to do that.

I will just finish with regard to kindergarten participation. I have already alluded to international and national research which shows that participation in quality early education programs results in positive long-term outcomes. In addition to that we are continuing to work on kindergarten attendance rates here in Queensland, which is what we have Queensland Kindergarten Funding Scheme for.

Ms PEASE: With reference to page 5 of the SDS and the government's commitment to secure the future of Queensland's 10 children and family centres, since the Australian government ceased funding on 30 June 2014 young Indigenous families in their communities have been seeking help to find certainty in funding to keep the doors open. What have you done to help these centres?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. This is something that I was confronted with as well when I became the minister. Despite the federal government funding the establishment and construction costs of 10 child and family centres here in Queensland, the Abbott government walked away from this. Just to give you an idea, child and family centres provide integrated early childhood development, child and maternal health and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged from birth to eight years of age and their families.

Anyone who has been watching the commentary in this space would know that Twiggy Forrest's review found that the way to address the concerns that we are seeing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is to provide integrated services. The Forrest review was instigated by the Abbott government, and it clearly stated that the best way forward was to have integrated services. Here we have integrated services that were established, and then the federal Abbott government cut the funding for them when they were elected. This was completely in contradiction to the recommendations in the report that he had commissioned from Twiggy Forrest. It just does not make sense. At worst it is blatant politics because those centres had not been established under the Abbott government. Honourable member for Everton, they did not cut the Safe Schools program but they found the ability to cut child and family centres funding.

The state with the biggest impact from this federal decision was Queensland. Ten services were built in Queensland, so millions of taxpayers' dollars was spent building brand-new centres. I think the most recent one opened in Rockhampton or Mackay and these are purpose-built facilities in Mackay, Cairns, Doomadgee, Ipswich, Logan, Mareeba, Mornington Island, Mount Isa, Palm Island and Rockhampton. What I have decided to do as the minister is to fund this at a state level. Given the significant investment that taxpayers had made—tens of millions of dollars to build in Queensland but hundreds of millions of dollars across the country to build these new centres—I did not think that I should just shut up shop. What I announced in the budget is funding to keep these CFCs open. Some \$75 million was spent building these services in Queensland when unilaterally and without consultation the Abbott government decided overnight that they would no longer fund them, so we as a state have now had to step in.

On 3 June I announced in parliament that I was allocating a further \$5 million to ensure that these centres could keep their doors open. That is because I believe that these centres do really valuable work. Our government has now announced that, in order to give these centres funding certainty so they can get on with the job that they are doing—and all reports are that they are doing a very good job and I have previously reported on how many families have been accessing these services—we will provide \$38.8 million in additional funding over four years. This gives certainty to the employees, many of whom are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been able to secure work through these centres, and to the families that have learnt to rely on them. Between April and June this year over 1,000 families have already accessed these services.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, I refer to the very successful Great Results Guarantee program of the LNP government. At the end of the 2015-16 financial year, how much of the original \$797 million federal funding that was committed in 2014 will be remaining?

Ms JONES: I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to answer this question again. We saw the embarrassing gaffe by the honourable member during parliamentary question time and again say that the \$794.4 million will be provided to schools absolutely in total. What we saw was some scaremongering by the member that the way that we reported the GRG money in this year's budget was somehow different to the previous year. The first assertion was that it was not even in the budget—I was able to correct that—and, secondly, that somehow there had been some mysterious change to the way it was reported in the budget. It was reported in this year's budget exactly the same way as it was reported in last year's budget. I say again on the public record that the full \$794.4 million will go

directly to schools. We have made that commitment numerous times. Going back to your point about how many principals I get to meet with, I was able to go to Cairns recently and meet with the Queensland Association of State School Principals where there were more than 300 primary school principals where I was able to reiterate my position that all of the funding will be going to schools.

Mr MANDER: Minister, that was not my question. The question is: at the end of this financial year, how much of that funding will be remaining?

Ms JONES: From the spending? There was \$794.4 million over four years. In the first year—2013-14—it was \$131.3 million. In the second year it was \$183.3 million in 2015. In 2016 it is \$299.5 million. In 2017 it is \$180.3 million. So it is the 299.5 plus the 180.3.

Mr MANDER: Plus 180.3?

Ms JONES: Yes.

Mr MANDER: You just have to bear with me. My maths is not fantastic. Thank you. Minister, it is good to hear that you have remained committed to the LNP government's Great Results Guarantee initiative. Do you acknowledge that it is one of the major reasons we had an improvement in the NAPLAN results?

CHAIR: Minister, before you actually answer that one, member for Everton, I would remind you that your question is seeking an expression of opinion. I ask you to rephrase your question please.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Minister, you mentioned earlier the reasons for the NAPLAN result improvements this year. You did not mention the Great Results Guarantee. Was that an omission or do you believe it has not made a contribution?

Ms JONES: I think that the major contribution to the improvement in NAPLAN results in Queensland is the hardworking principals and teachers in our schools. They are the ones who are in our classrooms working day in, day out with our students to ensure that they are improving in those key areas, and they do that because they are passionate about young Queenslanders getting the very best start in life. With regard to the Great Results Guarantee, I think there are a number of things that need to be said for the record. One is that the Great Results Guarantee funding was federal government funding. It was indeed the third year of the Gonski consolidated money from the federal government. So it was not the Newman government coming in and deciding that it was going to commit an additional \$794.4 million towards education. That did not happen. What happened under the Newman government with regard to the state government allocation was the removal, as we heard from Jeff earlier, of more than 500 teachers from our schools.

So the policy decisions that were made and the implications for resources in our schools were to cut teachers from our schools by removing the rounding benefit for our primary schools, to remove resource teachers from our schools and then deny that you had cut positions. I am happy to get to GRG in the sense that what we have seen happening in transition over the last decade has been a decision to provide more autonomy and flexible decision making for principals in our schools. That comes with a responsibility for principals and also a responsibility for us as a department to ensure that we are building the capability of our principals so they can make those decisions for their schools.

There is no doubt that the federal government funding allocated directly to schools was overwhelmingly spent on human resources. What that says to me, as I am sure it says to the honourable member for Townsville who is nodding, is that when you give schools the choice about how they should spend their resources, guess what? They buy teachers. So we have a member of the former government sitting here saying, 'Aren't we brilliant because we gave the federal government funding directly to schools.' What did schools do with it? They bought teachers. Meanwhile, the former government cut more than 500 teachers. So I think we are in furious agreement in the sense that do we believe that the best investment we can make to improve educational outcomes in Queensland is investing in our teachers? Absolutely! That is why we went to the last election with a clear commitment that we would boost teacher numbers in this state by 875 teachers above growth. We are planning to employ 2,500 additional teachers over the next three years. If there is anything that the GRG process—the allocation of Australian federal government funding directly to schools—has demonstrated it is that when you give principals and teachers the choice they will always invest in their people.

Mr MANDER: Minister, the GRG funding was very targeted, proving the fact that it is how we spend the money, not the amount of the money, that is the priority. Can you guarantee that after 2015-16 under future GRG funding no school will be worse off than they were prior to that period?

Ms JONES: Yes.

Mr MANDER: So no school will receive a reduced amount of money?

Ms JONES: Yes.

Mr MANDER: Minister, will you be resisting your union comrades that are demanding that this funding be provided on a needs basis?

Ms JONES: What I will be doing is what I have already said publicly numerous times—that is, that the money provided by the federal government allocated to schools of \$794.4 million will be provided directly to schools. Am I picking up from the honourable member that needs should not come into it? My understanding is that under the model you just talked about—the model instigated by the former government—there actually was a provision for a needs basis. That was the determination that was for the allocation of schools, so I am not going to move away from the needs based process that was already in place under the former minister.

Mr MANDER: It is good to hear that no school will be worse off. I look forward to seeing that rolled out. Minister, you have stated on numerous occasions that you are very upset with the federal government with regard to not funding the fanciful unfunded Gonski funding. Would you please advise how many times you or your office has written or telephoned Minister Pyne on this matter?

Ms JONES: I have had the great privilege of meeting with Christopher Pyne, I think, three times since I have been the minister. Once was in my office, and obviously very fortunately I am also the chair of the Education Council this year. So, whether he likes it or not, I am the chair so I get to say what we talk about at the council meetings. They know me better than you do I guess, but they would know that I would not miss out on the opportunity to ask Christopher Pyne about funding cuts, and that is exactly what I did as the education minister. Let us be very frank about this though in that we have a federal government—and you do not have to take just my word for it, and I refer you to public statements made by Catholic education and independent education as well—in reaction to the federal government's latest budget. What all sectors of our community—Catholic schools, independent schools and state schools—are in chorus about is criticism of the federal government's abandonment of the education index and the funding model that is proposed under the federal government to move away from the education index, which is currently indexed at 4.7 per cent and cut that back to an allocation of 2.5 per cent which is the current CPI rate. The risk with moving away from the true cost of education and moving to CPI is that it might be 2.5 per cent now, but it will go up or down depending on CPI. It goes up with the CPI, but it is not going to be at the same level that we have seen under the education index. This is a fundamental shift.

With regard to your accusations about Gonski, New South Wales got the full Gonski allocation. What we saw was a conservative government in New South Wales that stepped up to the plate and said that it wanted to be part of the Gonski model, and I acknowledge and congratulate the New South Wales government for putting politics aside and actually looking at the best interests of students in that state and congratulate them for that.

Mr MANDER: Let us talk about that, Minister. Would you please advise the financial commitment that the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd federal government demanded from the previous state government to sign up to Gonski?

Ms JONES: I do not know what that has to do with the SDS. Also, as you are well aware, I was not the minister at the time.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I was just about to call—

Mr MANDER: Mr Chair, the minister has brought this issue up herself—

Ms JONES: No, I have not. He raised it.

Mr MANDER:—talking about New South Wales accepting the Gonski funding. It is very relevant. The question is relevant with regard to future federal funding. There was a demand made by the previous state government to be included in the Gonski funding and I do not believe that the minister has any understanding of that. I am asking her what is that commitment that is required—the commitment that the New South Wales government has given.

Ms JONES: They committed additional dollars at a state level towards Gonski. You and I both know that. We also both know that your government refused to put in one extra dollar to secure that Gonski funding. Am I confident that we are going to be able to get the federal Labor opposition—if that is where you want to go with state estimates—to go with the Gonski model? We do not know at this stage. I am still waiting for that advice. Do we stand by the principles of Gonski, which is about funding

students based on need? Absolutely. Is this some state school conspiracy? No. It is something that is supported by all sectors of education because we believe—I believe; I do not know what you believe, but I believe—that when it comes to investing in education and the future of our country then putting money into education is the right thing to do. That is why I sit here as the Minister for Education with a record investment in Education. The first Palaszczuk Labor government budget that we are talking about today—this estimates hearing—delivers a record investment in Education, and why? Why? Because we think education should always be the No. 1 priority of our government because that is an investment in the future of our state and our people.

I do not have a crystal ball in regard to how this federal election is going to play out, but can I say this: I will be arguing absolutely against the cuts to education for state schools and independent schools that were delivered and confirmed in the latest Abbott budget. I hope that, if all the questions you have asked me this afternoon are genuine, you will join me and say that moving away for the first time in 20 years from the education index to CPI is a backward step and one that should be derided and one that should be corrected. I pray to God that by the time we get to the next election they have changed their position.

Mr MANDER: Minister, it is very difficult to cut funding that was not there. But putting that aside—

Ms JONES: No, this is the CPI index. It was there. It absolutely was there.

Mr MANDER: Minister, you have mentioned already that it would seem that the federal Labor opposition has walked away from Gonski and it looks like the Victorian Labor government has also walked away from Gonski. If you propose to go alone on this, where will you find the funding—the \$953 million—for Gonski, which was asked for with dollar-for-dollar matching?

CHAIR: Member for Everton, this is a hypothetical question and I would ask you to rephrase your question.

Mr MANDER: Mr Chairman, the minister has gone on and on—

Ms JONES: It is okay. We have got the fact that he is a Gonski basher. It is okay. It is on the public record. I will make sure that everybody knows.

Mr MANDER: I am not; I am a responsible opposition spokesperson who wants to know, Minister, what your plans are. It is very easy to continue to speak about this without backing it up with action. Where are you going to find the \$953 million that is required to match the so-called Gonski funding?

CHAIR: And again, member for Everton, under standing order 115(b), questions are not to contain hypothetical matters. I will ask you to rephrase your question or I will deem it out of order.

Ms JONES: There is no money in the budget.

CHAIR: It is a hypothetical question.

Ms JONES: Yes, you are right. The reason it is hypothetical is that we have an Australian government that has walked away from Gonski. Is there a proposal by the current Australian government that says, 'We want to go with the Gonski model?' No, absolutely not. They have walked away from it. That is right. So did I go into my budget negotiations trying to get hypothetical matching funding for a hypothetical government that has walked away from Gonski? No. What I did was say, 'What do we need here in Queensland when we listen to locals?' They tell me they want additional teachers and that is exactly what we have delivered.

What we know from today's discussion—and I will make sure that every teacher in every school in Queensland knows—is that you spent your time here at estimates talking about how you do not support Gonski, you do not support the principles of Gonski, and you stand alone outside of independent schools, Catholic schools and state schools in this state—

Mr CRAMP: Are you going to tell them a hypothetical situation—

Ms JONES:—that are consistently saying that they want to see needs based funding for education. I got into politics because I wanted to ensure that every single child, no matter where they come from, no matter who their parents are, no matter how much money their parents earn, no matter where they live in this state and whatever faith they choose to teach their children, get access to good-quality education, and I will fight for that every single day that I am sitting in this chair.

Mr MANDER: I am glad you coupled the words 'hypothetical' and 'Gonski'. Minister, it has been nearly five months since the public consultation of the reform of the OP system passed. Is it simply a coincidence that you have announced the conclusion of the OP review on the day of your estimates hearing?

Ms JONES: As you well know, there was a review that was instigated by the previous government which I acknowledged a couple of hours ago now. I said that, as you would have seen in your own budget papers, not one dollar was allocated by the previous government to implement any of those reforms. If I had been the minister from go to whoa, would I have done this differently? Absolutely. But what I have inherited is a government that went out with a discussion paper and came back with a report into what they were going to do but did not allocate any funding for that.

As the minister I have gone through the consultation process. I know that when I became minister there was already active community consultation underway by the previous government. I do not think that concluded until May. I did not want to pre-empt that review, but I wanted to hear for myself what stakeholders were saying. What they have said to me—and I think you acknowledged it earlier today—is that they want to see this reform going forward and they want to be part of the discussion and the implementation. That is why I have announced the ministerial task force.

Secondly, this also had to be a cabinet decision, obviously, because it is a major shift in policy. As I said, and publicly said today, we are still working through the full cost of the implementation, because I am allowing—and I think it is the right decision—to have the task force established, which will include principals, teachers, independent schools, Catholic schools, universities, the QCAA, parents and QTAC to work together to get the implementation. So the cost will change depending on whether we move to what percentage of external assessment. These are things that we cannot decide up-front. We need to listen to the experts and that is what they have asked me to do.

I am very pleased that we have the framework and that we are moving forward. Overwhelmingly, the response has been that the year 11, 2018 implementation date is the right one. Chris from the QCAA spoke earlier and I note the comments made by a number of key stakeholders today from across the sectors that endorsed this time frame.

There is work that needs to happen now in regard to strengthening the current system. This work, given that it is predominantly around school based assessment, will benefit students in the OP system but also is work that will be transitioned into the new ATAR system, which will bring Queensland into line with every other state in Australia which provides their young people with an ATAR score.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, I refer you to page 9 of the SDS and the reference to students with a disability. I am aware that the state schooling system is by far the major supporter of children with special needs.

Ms JONES: Yes.

Mr SAUNDERS: Could you please provide the committee with some information about the size of this cohort and any other relevant information that will provide us with a good understanding of the complexities of supporting these most important students in our schools?

Ms JONES: Thank you very much. I welcome another question in regard to how we are working at a state level to support our students with disabilities in our schools. Let me begin by saying that our government is committed to providing high-quality education to all students, including students with a disability.

You are correct in that you said in your opening statement that the majority of students with a disability are receiving their education through the state system here in Queensland. In actual fact, some 86 per cent of students who have disabilities are in the state system. I can advise that the estimated average cost of a service per student with a disability is just over \$27,000. This is compared to around \$12,500 per primary school student and more than \$13,000 per secondary student. So it is evident that the Queensland government does invest significantly more to ensure that students with disabilities are supported. Of course, ensuring that students with special needs and disabilities are supported was one of the key drivers of the Gonski reforms and discussions.

As to the breakdown of the different types of disability, I can advise the committee that, of the approximately 29,000 state school students who are identified as having a disability, 43.5 per cent are students with autism spectrum disorder, 34.8 per cent are students with intellectual impairment, 7.9 per cent are students with hearing impairment and 7.7 per cent are students with speech language impairment. There are also 4.7 per cent of students with physical impairment and 1.4 per cent of students with vision impairment. The committee should be aware that in the case of students with multiple disabilities the most significant is recorded in these statistics.

The committee should also be aware of the significant and ongoing increase in the enrolment of students with disabilities. Since 2011, the number of students with a disability has grown by 25.8 per cent compared to the growth of just 6.8 per cent in total enrolments. This is something that we are

aware of and something that we are mindful of. As you heard in my opening comments, we made a specific allocation in the budget to cater for this growth. That is an investment in our capital works to ensure we are improving the facilities that are available for students with special needs.

Ms PEASE: In light of your advice regarding the increase in the percentage of students in state schools with disabilities, would you be able to outline what the Palaszczuk government is doing to support students with disabilities?

Ms JONES: Yes. I thank the member for the question and for the opportunity to talk about this. I think it is appropriate that I start by, once again, acknowledging the great work—and I am sure that the honourable member for Everton would as well in the fact that I know that he is a regular visitor to the Mitchelton Special School in his electorate, which I have also had the opportunity to visit. He has seen, as I have seen firsthand, the hardworking and talented staff who we have not only obviously at Mitchelton Special School but all of the special schools in our local communities. I know that the member for Lytton herself is particularly proud of the Darling Point Special School in her electorate. I look forward to joining her there in the near future.

As the Minister for Education I can say that students with a disability are our priority. It has to be, particularly when, as you have just heard, going through those numbers, we are the provider for the majority of students with a disability in this state. What we have seen in this 2015-16 budget—our first budget—is \$929.5 million that has been allocated for services for students with a disability in state schools. This represents an increase of \$72.1 million from last year—a significant increase—because we recognise that this is an area where we are going to see continued growth and we want to make sure that we are investing where that need is.

That funding has gone directly to supporting state school students with a disability. As I have said already, the Palaszczuk government will also deliver the new Cairns Special School, a much needed additional facility in that community and for young people with disabilities in Far North Queensland. I know that the member for Cairns has been a very proud advocate for that in his region and was champing at the bit to publicly announce it.

In the 2015 budget, support for students with disabilities will include more than 2,700 full-time-equivalent positions for specialist teachers and over 70,000 teacher aide hours for primary and secondary schools; over 1,000 full-time-equivalent teachers and over 24,000 teacher aide hours for special schools, like the ones we have just spoken about and the one in the Lytton electorate; over 100 full-time-equivalent teacher positions and over 2,000 teacher aide hours for early childhood development programs and occupational therapy and physiotherapy services, including over 100 full-time-equivalent positions; more than 30 full-time-equivalent positions for state school registered nurse positions and 78 speech language therapy positions.

Going back to the broader discussion we were having earlier about when you have a choice about where you spend your money, you clearly see that, in addition to the work that I talked about with capital works, there is a significant investment in this budget in the staffing and resourcing that we need in our schools to ensure those students are getting the best quality education they can through the state school system. To account for the 5.1 per cent growth in enrolments this year, support for students with a disability has increased with an additional 218.4 full-time teacher position equivalents and 5,445 teacher aide hours per week—so a six per cent increase allocated across special, primary and secondary schools for the 2015 school year.

I have already alluded to the maintenance funding in the budget. I think, in answer to your question, it is very clear that we put our money where our mouth is in this regard. We recognise that we are going to have to have a continued investment as we cater for the growth in students with disabilities in our schools. But I think what is really important about having this funding—and you saw the significant increase that we had in the budget—is that it sends a very clear message to those families and to our students: 'You are welcome. We embrace you and we want to ensure that all students have access to good-quality education.'

Ms PEASE: Minister, considering the significant proportion of students with disabilities who have autism, would you be able to outline what the Palaszczuk government is doing for students with autism in particular?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for his question and I am sure that all honourable members of the committee would be interested in this answer because I know as a local member of parliament it is one that often does get raised with you and is one where we are seeing increasing awareness about autism in our community. As I said earlier, almost 44 per cent of students with a disability enrolled in Queensland schools have been diagnosed as being within the autism spectrum. In terms of support specific to students with autism, I can advise that the department provides additional resources to

schools to support students with autism in addition to the allocation of classroom teachers and teacher aides provided to schools based on enrolment numbers. The positions of classroom teachers and teacher aides provided for school based enrolment numbers were the teachers I talked to before that the previous government cut. What we are providing is filling those positions and providing that additional resource.

This additional resourcing includes access to specialist teachers with autism spectrum disorder expertise offering specific support to address a student's individual learnings or behaviour needs such as teaching anger management skills to support the student to self-regulate their emotions, teaching social skills and how to interact with their peers inside and outside the classroom, debriefing with students at the beginning and end of the day to promote positive behaviour and supporting students when they are highly anxious and displaying unsafe behaviours. Specialist teachers also provide assistance to classroom teachers in the development and delivery of students' educational programs within the classroom—for example, visual schedules and timetables. Many of us who have been into classrooms and been with students who have been diagnosed with autism often see that on their desks. I have seen it work extremely well. There is also assistant technology such as iPads to access literacy and communication activities and whole-class behaviour management strategies. I do not know if you wanted to add anything, Patrea. I know this is something you are very passionate about.

Ms Walton: Thank you, Minister. Autism is the disability most often referred to as the invisible disability because unlike students with a Cochlear implant, unlike students in a wheelchair, it is often misinterpreted as students engaging in inappropriate behaviour. The department has invested heavily in support. First of all, I want to say that schools do not make the diagnosis around autism. That is up to medical professionals to do that. However, we have provided significant amounts of training to schools to support teachers to ensure that children with autism have the best educational opportunity made available to them. Base funding is provided to schools for each individual student, plus also additional funding is provided through the conduit—through the governance of the state schooling disability board which has a large representation on that board. But ultimately it is about every student succeeding and providing the necessary supports needed to ensure that every child, including children with autism, has the best chance to succeed educationally as well as socially in the state schooling system.

Mr SAUNDERS: Page 7 of the SDS refers to the government's extra teachers policy. I am aware that the Palaszczuk government made a number of commitments during the 2015 election campaign regarding support for teachers and principals and support to increase teacher numbers. The SDS indicates that the government is now delivering on these commitments. Can the minister inform the committee how the announcement to provide an additional 2,500 teachers over this term will impact on Queensland state schools?

Ms JONES: Yes. This is very exciting. As I said, we have announced that we will provide an additional 875 over growth and in total 2,500 teachers. This really is a response that we have come to based on the consultation we have had with communities. I made the point earlier, and I will make it again, that when you provide funding like we saw with the Australian federal government directly to schools what do schools do with that funding? They spend it on human resources. They spend it on additional teachers, teacher aides and support staff in their school so they can improve the educational outcomes in their school. This is a clear demonstration that we are listening to schools and delivering.

The extra teachers policy prioritises these additional teachers in a number of ways: employing specialist teachers in our state high schools and reducing class sizes in our primary schools—and I know in a question on notice that I provided ahead of the estimates that we saw under the LNP government an increase in class sizes because of the withdrawal of resourcing of classroom teachers during their time and I would actually point all members of parliament to that because it is informative and actually demonstrates clearly that their claims that they had not cut any teachers are wrong because the class sizes changed. Having said that, class sizes are not the be-all and end-all. They definitely help and every teacher you speak to says it is obviously more manageable when there are fewer students in classes but, of course, relieving pressure on teachers and principals in schools through additional resourcing to free up teachers to have that additional time to go away and do some of that more detailed work—for example, my son's own classes. He is a preppie at a local school and his teacher has time out of the classroom one day a week where she goes away and does the whole of school work in regards to IT because that is an area she is very passionate about. I think it is a very good thing because I know that my child benefits from that broader gaining of knowledge through the school—and he has got a great teacher on a Friday.

It also will see each of our state high schools provided with an additional full-time specialist teacher. As I said, when I have been speaking to principals—the hundreds of principals I have spoken to since I became the minister; you know what they are like, member for Townsville—they wanted flexibility regarding these 875 teachers. They wanted the opportunity, particularly in primary schools, to have additional deputy positions as well as additional specialist teachers and also resourcing teachers. So there is overwhelming support for the program and I look forward to rolling that out in consultation with schools.

Mr SAUNDERS: Minister, further to your last response, what does the commitment to deliver 875 teachers beyond growth actually mean for every one of our 1,234 state schools and particularly what will it mean for primary schools in 2016?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. What it means is that every single state primary, high, combined and special school will benefit through an additional allocation of teachers for their schools. I ask the committee to note that 65 per cent of the 875 teachers, or 564 teacher full-time equivalents, will be allocated to primary schools. This is once again from listening to our primary school colleagues who say that they really do need those additional resources because they identify that there are more additional positions in a high school in regards to supporting the principal. This initiative will provide at least 190 identified state high schools as well with a full-time specialist teacher to relieve the pressures on teachers and principals in our state high schools. Thirty-three teacher FTEs will be allocated to lower the threshold at which these schools become entitled to a third deputy principal and increase the number of deputy principals—he is nodding; this is what they want to hear—available to our largest high schools that have grown well beyond their existing allocations. The old allocative model was outdated.

While we are doing a major review—which I can go into in regards the task force that we are setting up to look at state schooling HR—here are the resources upfront to start making those changes in our schools now. High schools will further benefit by the allocation of 23 full-time equivalents to provide additional head of department positions in the larger schools that have grown well beyond the existing staffing model upper limits for head of department allocations. These additional investments will place at least 290 more teachers per year in 2016, 2017 and 2018 into our state schools to maximise learning outcomes for our students.

Most importantly, as I said, we will restore in 2016—already next year we are going to restore—the 185 teachers that were stripped from primary schools under the LNP's decision to unilaterally remove the rounding benefit. I know that schools in my community definitely lost a teacher as a consequence of that. I know that principals will value the restoration of the flexibility that has been provided, and this is the overwhelming advice that I have received most recently at the primary schools principals association conference that I went to—QASSP—in Cairns. More than 300 principals were there and I had the opportunity to stay and mix with them through lunch. That was very well received, Director-General. The extra teachers policy prioritises these additional teacher full-time equivalent positions as I have outlined. So there is lots of good news coming our way. I could say to the member for Lytton that almost 10 additional FTEs will be in your electorate; for Maryborough almost 10 additional; for Toowoomba South eight additional FTEs—the member for Southern Downs is not here anymore, or the member for Surfers Paradise—for Everton 10 additional teachers.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I call the member for Everton.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, will you please advise the committee when you will be reopening Fortitude Valley State School?

Ms JONES: I thank the member for the question. I will say this: at the moment, I am sure the honourable member is aware, there is currently a Brisbane inner city schools review underway in regards to the growth in that area. He would be very familiar that it came up during the election that there was a unilateral decision to close the school with very little consultation with the school community. There was a strong belief—

Mr MANDER: That is simply untrue, Minister.

Ms JONES: Okay. I guess I am getting briefed differently. I am sure the new member for Brisbane Central would be arguing that the community would say to her, and as she has represented to me, that they felt that there was very little consultation. Anyway, that is a matter of opinion, I guess. What I can say is that at this stage I am awaiting the results of that review and then I will be making a decision. I think it is fair to say that, given its location—being in the city centre—that we as a government have decided that we want to retain that site and retain that site for an educational purpose. Once I have the results from the inner city school review to work out whether it is needed in the future for growth or

whether there is scope for us to look at other options to showcase some of the challenges and opportunities that we have going forward in education, I will be releasing a discussion paper in regards to our future education priorities in addition to what we have talked about here today. I definitely see Fortitude Valley as having a potential role to play.

Mr MANDER: You were quoted in the press earlier this year that you will be making a decision about Fortitude Valley midyear after the budget. You are just dragging the chain on this issue, are you not?

Ms JONES: The master planning exercise has not finished yet so I suspect that I will get the results of that in the next couple of weeks, is what I was briefed. Once I get those results then I will make an announcement about that. But I think what is clear is that we are going to keep the site. I think that it is a valuable site for us as the education department in the sense that I think there are real opportunities to convert that site, if it is not needed for growth, into somewhere to showcase some of the new and exciting initiatives that will be happening in our education system and to use it for professional development and even for students to come and have excursions to look at some of the things that are happening. Look, I am not going to sit here and pre-empt the master planning exercise. It is still midyear and I expect that I will get that report in the coming weeks.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can I refer you, please, to note 30 on page 29 of the SDS and ask what the assets are that are no longer required by the Department of Education and Training that have been mentioned there?

Ms JONES: What page was it again, sorry?

Mr MANDER: Note 30 on page 29. It is also mentioned at note 39 of page 31.

Ms JONES: Adam can go into more detail but in regards to our commitment as a government, and you know this because there was a question asked of me for the committee and an answer provided to the committee, that as the Minister for Education I have advised the committee previously that there are no education assets listed for sale or disposal.

Mr Black: As the minister has stated, and in the response to the question on notice, there are currently no assets and there will be no assets actually disposed of or put up for sale. However, as I suppose a technical accounting treatment, those assets that are currently listed in the balance sheet were there at the time of the production of the SDS and were listed by the former government in the accounting system. As the current government is currently reviewing the status and how to address those land assets, the accounting treatment is that those assets still have to stay in the books.

Mr MANDER: Assistant Director-General, you probably need to elaborate a little more on that. Are these real assets—

CHAIR: Member for Everton, can you direct it through the minister?

Ms JONES: That is fine.

Mr MANDER: Through the minister, with the disposal of any assets, whether they are educational assets or whatever, is there anything actually being disposed of?

Mr Black: In the current financial year, there are no assets planned to be disposed. However, for a technical accounting treatment, due to the fact that they were listed prior to January 2015, there are assets that were previously planned to be disposed that are currently listed for disposal and under accounting treatments we cannot remove them from the disposal list from a technical perspective until there is, I guess, a government direction on how those assets are to be dealt with. As the minister indicated, there are such reviews going on of the department assets. As the minister has stated in a question on notice and in the committee, there are no actual disposals taking place.

Mr MANDER: That referred to buildings and land?

Mr Black: There are buildings and land in the list of disposals. I should point out, too, that the vast majority of the funding in the assets held for sale list is actually TAFE or training, not educational state school land.

Mr MANDER: Thank you for that. Minister, I refer to the slashing of the funding of the Great Teachers = Great Results program. I ask: what is the future of the 300 master teachers created under this particular initiative?

Ms JONES: As I have said previously, I am continuing to keep the Master Teachers program. What we saw at the election, as has been a matter of public record for some time now, is that we were going to use some savings from the Great Teachers = Great Results program to fund our initiative,

which is the extra teachers. As we have talked about at length here, it is an additional 2,500 teachers, including 875 above growth, and the 45 guidance officers employed over the next three years. As you know, there were a number of programs funded through that. That is one of the programs that we will be retaining.

Mr MANDER: Minister, how will that be funded?

Ms JONES: The funding has been delivered in the budget.

Mr MANDER: Is the 300 part of the 875?

Ms JONES: When you were in government the total commitment for GT=GR was \$537 million. It has been a matter of public record since January that we were going to redirect \$180 million of this towards Great Teachers = Great Results. However, a number of the programs will continue with regard to Great Teachers = Great Results, as I have said. For example, Mentoring Beginning Teachers will continue, Master Teachers will continue and the early years resourcing package will continue. The *Courier-Mail* should be here now; we are not cutting everything. As we said, with some we have redirected the funding. With Masters Teachers, I have been on the public record previously—months ago, actually—saying that we are going to keep that program.

Mr MANDER: I missed the very first item you said was going to be continued under the funding?

Ms JONES: Mentoring Beginning Teachers.

Mr MANDER: So the mentoring teachers program will continue as well?

Ms JONES: That is right.

Mr MANDER: Is that designed for first-year teachers?

Ms JONES: Predominantly, yes, it is for first-year teachers to be mentored through the program. It is something that I recognise is a good program and will continue. We had an iteration of that previously under former minister Cameron Dick. We have seen a strengthening of that program under the former government and I will continue that program.

Mr MANDER: Will the reduction of funding of Great Teachers = Great Results have any impact on the annual performance reviews that were agreed upon in the previous government, with the cooperation of unions?

Ms JONES: I think it is all about score reviews. We are going to continue with what we have rolled out this year, which I think is an even better program—that is, school reviews. This is where we actually have expert panels of principals. The Gap State High School principal, for example, has been one of the panellists, as has my former principal from Kelvin Grove when I was there, Daryl Hanly, who also spent a lot of time at Nudgee. I am getting to your point, but the 100th school review this year occurred at Oakleigh State School in my electorate.

This is a panel of principals who go into our schools and spend numerous days not only interviewing the principal and the support staff but also interviewing parents and students, to talk about what is happening in their school and how they are delivering not only on their NAPLAN results but also, of course, on the priorities of that school and what the school community wants. I have had overwhelming support for this—and I do not know if you have one in your electorate—from every school I have spoken to. In fact, I have schools putting their hands up trying to move their way up the list, because the professional development for the teachers and principals in those schools is second to none. Indeed, the principals of existing schools who are on the expert panel and go into other schools, even though they are there to go through the experience of that primary school or high school, are actually gaining learnings from that experience which they take back into their own high schools.

This is something that I think builds on what you have talked about, but it is broader and is delivering a better educational outcome. Every single principal I have spoken to, parents I have spoken to who have been involved and, indeed, students who get the opportunity to sit there with a very experienced principal and education expert, talk about their experience of the school. All of that information is collated and informed to the principal, so as a school community they can continue to grow and evolve their school. I know Jim is very passionate about that.

Mr MANDER: Minister, that is not my question, although I thank you for it. It is not about the school reviews. It is about the individual annual performance reviews of teachers. Is the commitment remaining to that particular process?

Ms JONES: Yes.

Mr MANDER: Thank you. Minister, again with regard to the cutting of \$180 million from the Great Teachers = Great Results program, I understand that funding of IP schools came under that particular program. Will funding of \$50,000 annually continue for IP schools?

Ms JONES: Yes. I have been on the public record with regard to IP schools, saying that I will continue with the rollout of up to 250 schools to 2017.

Mr MANDER: Minister, would you agree that the IPS program has been an overwhelming success?

Ms JONES: Having had a look at that, I think when it comes to IP schools, while not everyone is over the moon about it—I have to be honest with you—a lot of schools are. There are some great IP schools in my local community. I will continue to roll it out under the current funding arrangements to 250 schools to 2017. I will have a look at it at that time.

I have been on the public record about this. It is my honest belief that we have seen a number of schools where we have very active parent bodies involved and principals that have been the first initiators in this regard. There is a significant number in the Ashgrove electorate compared to any other electorate in the whole of Queensland. You can draw your own conclusions about that. I draw the conclusion that I have really good schools.

We have said that there definitely are some strengths to that, but also some issues have been raised with me by principals and I am looking at that. I think taking a measured approach is the right one. At the moment, the program, under both the previous government and this government, is funded to roll out to, I think, 130 at the moment and we will be going to 250 by the end of 2017, which is where the federal and state funding agreement is for the IP schools. I know that the member for Townsville was principal of an IP school. There are some very good IP schools that I have spoken about. I want to ensure, as we continue to go forward, that we have not only the resources but also the capacity and the capability in all of our IP schools to ensure they are the best model of service delivery for that school community.

Mr MANDER: Minister, can you advise when expressions of interest will go out for the next round of IPS?

Ms JONES: Yes. That should be announced in the next couple of weeks.

Mr MANDER: Excellent. Minister, again with regard to the caps on the funding of the Great Teachers = Great Results program, I believe there was some funding there to help build the capacity of schools, particularly disadvantaged schools, to actually get to IPS status. Is that funding still available?

Ms JONES: As I have said before, while there is a view that IP schools are the right solution to service delivery for a number of schools, there has been criticism about overrepresentation of schools in some areas and no representation in other areas. For example, there is not one IP school in the Logan area, not one. However, there are numerous IP schools in my electorate, as I alluded to. That has been one of the criticisms of the IPS program so far. I have said that I want to see more diversity in the IP schools that we have and we are working with schools in that regard. Logan schools have made representations saying—and I cannot talk for all of them—that they felt overlooked. Patrea, do you want to add to that?

Ms Walton: Certainly. For the previous three rounds of IPS selection, unfortunately there was no school in the Logan area that, through the open merit process, became an IP school. That does not mean that all schools in the Logan area applied. There were a small number of schools that did apply and the principals of those schools have asked the question about the selection process. What we are doing for the next round of IPS selection is web conferences and direct working with individual schools to assist them with their program writing, because there are a number of criteria that they need to address. Basically, we will provide a bit more support to those particular schools around how they could best put in an application to support their IPS selection. It will still undergo the process. There will be a selection process. The selection process is not done by me; it is done by a group of people. In the last IPS selection we had an IPS principal, a previous IPS principal, and association presidents and principals around the table to make the decision. However, we realise that there is more work to be done to support schools in their submission writing.

Mr MANDER: Thank you, Deputy Director-General. Minister, was there a survey done of IP schools earlier this year? If there was, what were the results or the major outcomes of that survey?

Ms JONES: To inform my decisions, we have had an evaluation. The department decided that the best way forward was to have a bit of a survey of IP schools to see how they are tracking and how they are going and to inform learnings ahead of the new rollout. My understanding is that that has concluded and we will be making an announcement, as I said, in coming weeks about the new round of independent schools being offered in the future.

Mr MANDER: Minister, this is a different subject, briefly. Going back to NAPLAN, there were some disturbing figures with regard to the withdrawal rate of NAPLAN. I think it was double the average across the nation. What plans do you have to address that withdrawal rate?

Ms JONES: You have offended me, member for Everton. I answered one of their questions on this very issue and articulated exactly what I was going to do. I do not know what you were listening to, but you certainly were not listening to me. Here you are accusing me of not being able to keep up with my job. You only have to be here for a couple of hours.

Mr MANDER: They ask questions twice as well.

Ms JONES: Yes, I have already answered that question.

Mr MANDER: If could you repeat it, that would be a great.

Ms JONES: No. You get paid as a shadow minister to come here and do estimates. This is the one day a week that you have to be on the ball.

Mr CRAMP: The minister is refusing to answer the question.

Ms JONES: No, I am not. I have already answered the question. I was asked that exact question from over there. I answered it as part of this estimates hearing. If the opposition member was not listening, do I have to do his work for him, too? One minute he is accusing me of not being able to do my job, but he cannot do his job. The answer is, yes, I have raised concerns about this. I have just talked to those concerns. One of the things that I said was going to be an outcome of that, if you had been listening, was that I was going to raise it as the—

Mr CRAMP: Mr Chair—

Ms JONES: One moment: I think it is fair for me to argue, given that you came in here guns blazing—

Mr CRAMP: It is not a debate; it is question and answer. Is this a debate?

Ms JONES:—accusing me of not being able to keep up with my job.

Mr CRAMP: Excuse me, Chair, is this a debate?

Ms JONES: The shadow minister asked the same question that was asked by a member of parliament an hour ago.

Mr CRAMP: The question was asked and the minister should answer the question.

CHAIR: Order! Given that the question has already been asked and answered, I invite the member for Everton to ask another question.

Mr MANDER: We are fine now, thanks.

Mr SAUNDERS: Further to the rollout of the election commitments, page 7 of the SDS mentions the government's commitment regarding additional guidance officers. Can you advise how the distribution of the 45 additional guidance officers supports Queensland state high schools?

Ms JONES: As I said earlier, one of our key commitments with regard to guidance officers is to increase them by 45 as part of our education policy. We recognise the importance of guidance officers to support Queenslanders and their young lives, particularly, as I articulated earlier, in the very complex world in which we live.

The investment will allocate an additional 15 guidance officer positions each year to ensure all Queensland state schools with more than 500 students in a secondary school environment have better access to guidance support. While these schools have access to a level of guidance support through current resource allocations, this initiative will increase their available resources to a minimum of one guidance officer full-time-equivalent position. Every secondary school with 500 students or more will get a full-time guidance officer. This is something that teachers and principals have asked for and we have delivered.

Schools with fewer than 500 secondary students will also benefit from additional guidance officer support through application of an enrolment driven methodology to bridge between the current method and the allocation of one full-time equivalent at 500 students. Incrementally increasing guidance officer

resourcing to these schools will help create a more predictable methodology for allocating this valuable resource and smooth the transition towards schools receiving one guidance officer full-time equivalent at the 500 student enrolment threshold.

Schools with 500 or more secondary enrolments will benefit from the supporting students initiatives in 2016 and 2017, while those with fewer than 500 students will receive their benefit during the final year of the initiative, in 2018. Under this commitment, over 105,000 secondary school aged students in more than 210 schools will benefit from the additional guidance officers. This commitment acknowledges the importance our government places on the work of guidance personnel and supporting young Queenslanders as they progress through their secondary schooling and transition to post destinations. I know that Patrea spent a lot of time in the secondary education system, as did the member for Townsville. I think every principal in a secondary setting would say what a benefit having a guidance officer is. I know that in the Everton electorate both Albany Creek and Everton Park state high schools will benefit from this initiative.

Ms PEASE: There is an allocation of \$6 million over three years—SDS page 7—to support a review of the award that will promote letting teachers teach. Can you advise how these funds will be used to support the modernisation of the teaching profession?

Ms JONES: Letting teachers teach is exactly the right flavour of discussion we need to have with our teachers. In fact, when I became the Minister for Education I had to drop my son off at prep. I was talking to his prep teacher and said, 'As I am the Minister for Education, can you tell me what is your No. 1 thing?' She said, 'Just let us teach. Just let us get on with the job of teaching.'

In January 2015 the government announced plans for a new teacher classification system and associated pay structure as part of the Letting Teachers Teach election commitment. This recognises the great work that is happening in our schools with our teachers, and through a piece of work which I think is long overdue we will work with our staff and key stakeholders to look at the way we resource our teachers. Consultation will shortly commence.

This really is about including additional career pathways and remuneration for teachers so that they can stay in the classroom and teach. With regard to career pathways for teachers, until now there has been a real focus on moving out of the classroom. This initiative is about encouraging, through deliberate policy, the opportunity for good-quality teachers with lots of experience to get the remuneration they need to make the decision to stay in the classroom.

We will have new categories of teachers, of highly accomplished and lead teachers as defined in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. It is anticipated that these initiatives will occur concurrently with the award modernisation, ensure enterprise bargaining processes and may influence the outcomes of these activities.

From the discussions I have had with the director-general and indeed my senior staff since I became minister, I think there is a whole piece of work that needs to happen around resourcing in our schools, not only with regard to teachers but also with regard to the support staff. I know that when members of parliament attend a school they talk to the BSM and the administrative staff. For a long time there has been an allocative model which is kind of antiquated, in my view. I think a lot of robust work can be done in consultation to look at what are the better ways of providing support for schools. That is something we will start work on very shortly, but it includes our election commitment around letting teachers teach, which, as I said, is about ensuring that our teachers who want to stay in the classroom have the opportunity to do so. I recognise through employment conditions that their work is valuable and that being a classroom teacher is just as valuable as some of the other leadership positions provided through the education system.

Ms PEASE: At pages 3 and 7 of the SDS and at other points, the need for specialist teachers, particularly in secondary schools, is raised. I also understand that there was an Auditor-General's report tabled under the last government that raised a concern about the need for more specialist teachers. Can you inform the committee how the department is working to meet this need?

Ms JONES: The member would have seen in our election policy commitment that we made a commitment around specialist teachers. We are very committed to ensuring that all schools have access to the high-quality teachers they require. The supply of teachers, especially in secondary schools, remains one of the most significant challenges facing the education system in Queensland today. A moment ago I referred to the broader piece of work that I think needs to happen with regard to resourcing and specialist teachers.

I acknowledge what appears to be a very genuine interest from the member for Toowoomba South with regard to all students, no matter where they live, having access to good-quality education. I sincerely mean that in regard to regional communities as well. I have already had some preliminary discussions with both the principals association and teachers about saying, 'What are some of the things we can be more creative about, about encouraging our teachers to go rural, to go regional and to fill some of the gaps that have been growing, particularly in recent years with regard to specialist teachers?' In this budget we have a down payment in regard to providing additional specialist teachers as part of our extra teachers commitment.

The Auditor-General made five recommendations about the quality and quantity of secondary teachers in Queensland schools as well as the information systems and strategies used to attract and retain specialist subject teachers. To address these recommendations we have been successfully implementing significant reform in the workplace. As I said, I have already been in discussions with tertiary institutes about how we can work with universities to encourage more of our new teachers to choose these specialist areas or indeed look at our 65,000-strong teacher workforce to use the opportunity, as some of those teachers are clearly very passionate about teaching, to upskill them in key areas where they might genuinely have a passion, be it science, mathematics, robotics or coding. This is probably the next big piece of work that we will be working on. Once again, I am very excited about it. Clearly, before the election we made a number of commitments which go to the heart of this. There is some real work that we can do to transform who is teaching in our schools and how we address those specialist needs.

Ms PEASE: Further to the need for specialist teachers, as stated in the SDS and your previous answer, can you outline what professional development resources and opportunities are available for state school teachers?

Ms JONES: The Department of Education and Training values the important role that teachers play in shaping the future of our children through education and is committed to developing the performance of all employees at every stage of their career. Once again, that goes to the heart of what we were talking with the Letting Teachers Teach policy and our commitment around specialist teachers.

The professional development for teachers begins with support of our preservice teachers in professional placements in our state schools, continues through the induction and support for beginning teachers and is sustained through the process of annual performance reviews and supporting professional development opportunities.

Through the Fresh Start strategy the department has partnered with non-government schools, universities and the Queensland College of Teachers to develop and implement professional experience partnership agreements and a professional experience reporting framework. This collaborative approach in Queensland across all sectors is fantastic when it comes to lifting the overall standards of teaching in our state.

The department supports the operation of six teacher education centres of excellence which provide excellent practicum experience for high-quality preservice teachers and which work in close partnerships with universities to ensure consistent, high standards for practice, experience and teacher preparation. I will continue to have discussions with universities—and I know there is action also happening at the Education Council level—in regard to how we work with universities to ensure that the courses and the preservice training and education provided provide new teachers with the best possible experience and skills they need to enter into the classroom.

In relation to questions asked earlier by the member for Everton, we said that we would continue the Mentoring Beginning Teachers program wherein all beginning teachers are matched with an experienced teacher as a mentor to support their induction and to assist with their transition into the profession. This is welcomed and has been in different iterations for numerous years. Mentoring Beginning Teachers has trained over 1,100 mentors, including 30 online mentors to break through some of those barriers with regard to regional Queensland. Workshops to train an additional 200 mentors are being held in areas of high demand. By the end of 2015 over 1,700 members will be trained as mentors. In total, the program aims to train and maintain a cohort of 3,000 trained mentors. Under the Mentoring Beginning Teachers program, schools receive teacher release supply funding for up to 18 hours per identified beginning teacher. That is where the funding goes. As we have seen, the funding which is provided to schools to help them free up some of the teacher time so we can do that capacity building in our schools is something schools really embrace, and we can see real results being driven from that.

Mr SAUNDERS: At page 7 and other areas the SDS mentions the government's intention to support the teaching of science, technology, engineering and maths. What is the Palaszczuk government doing to promote STEM subjects at Queensland state schools?

Ms JONES: I am very excited about this. The Queensland government does aim to improve the training of STEM to create a workforce of skilled teachers in STEM and a STEM-literate population that values and encourages innovation. It is twofold. One aspect is investing in our teachers. I have this firsthand from principals and teachers I have spoken to. Where we have passionate teachers already working in the teaching profession—they do it because they love teaching kids and they love the moment when a student really understands some of those key concepts—we can work with them to upskill them in specialist areas. The ability to address some of the concerns in regard to access to specialist teachers is something I am very particular about.

We also see that the role we can play as the education department in not only upskilling our teachers but also upskilling our students will really strengthen our ability as a state to diversify our economy and create a more knowledge based economy through the creation of new products, services and jobs. I have made reference to this a little bit today—not so much this afternoon due to the line of questioning—but we did announce as part of the Advance Queensland strategy that we have committed to reviewing the teaching and learning of STEM subjects in Queensland and to foster greater links between teachers, industry, universities and research organisations to champion STEM futures.

This review of STEM will consist of looking at what is best practice, a literature review and a school survey. The department has commissioned Griffith University to undertake a review of both national and international literature to look at best practice teaching and learning approaches. Griffith University has already been commissioned with this work and that will help inform some of the discussions and changes that I want to implement as minister. The proposed time line for the STEM review is as follows: a survey of STEM teacher and learning approaches to be conducted and results to be compiled by 30 September 2015; the literature review to be conducted by Griffith University, as I just mentioned, is also due on 30 September; and the final report for government is to be completed by 30 November 2015.

A dedicated STEM team has been established by the department also to guide schools' decisions on the best ways to improve student outcomes for STEM; to promote strategies to increase the number of students choosing STEM pathways and to improve students' achievement in STEM subjects; to support schools' curriculum delivery with classing resources and professional development; to support teacher capability, in particular beginning and non-specialist STEM teachers, and I have been talking about that repeatedly this afternoon; and to work with leading STEM practitioners in schools, industry and research organisations.

I think that this is something very critical to the future of schooling in Queensland. I know that this is something that the Premier also shares a passion for. As I said earlier, we will be releasing a discussion paper about some of the future opportunities that we can provide in the schooling system to ensure that our young people are getting the best possible opportunity to participate in the future economy. That means that we need to give them the skills they need to do that now, not just to be consumers, for example, of digital technology but also to be the drivers and crafters of that digital future.

I think that this is probably one of the biggest responsibilities I have in regard to transforming the way we deliver education in Queensland. I know from all the consultation I have had with teachers, principals, students, all sectors of our community and the education community that people do want to see leadership in this area, and I am very pleased that we will be delivering on that. The DDG wishes to clarify something for the record.

Ms Walton: Just on the matter of STEM, if I may, another issue is the pipeline of graduates coming out of university to teach in our schools that have STEM qualifications. An extraordinary meeting of the deans of education from the universities across Queensland is being held next week to discuss the STEM strategy for the future so that we have that pipeline going forward.

I just needed to correct the record regarding the IPS selection process for 2015. I made reference to the principals association, in my enthusiasm and excitement, on the selection panel. I should have said principal representatives on the selection panel.

Ms JONES: I think we will forgive you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Deputy Director-General, for clarifying that. I call the member for Gaven.

Mr CRAMP: We were speaking previously about the union's inclusion on the principal selection panel. Can the minister advise that, if an applicant for a school principal position is not a member of the union, will that have a negative impact on that applicant's opportunity to be successful in gaining that position, noting that that person chooses wilfully not to join the union?

Ms JONES: No. I just want to answer that. No.

CHAIR: I was going to say before you answer that it is a hypothetical question.

Ms JONES: But I want to answer it because you can see what is happening here.

Mr CRAMP: My apologies. I thought this was current legislation about union encouragement.

CHAIR: It is a hypothetical question.

Ms JONES: No.

Mr CRAMP: Clarifying, as I stated before, that this is actual legislation and current policy introduced by this government to encourage unionism in the workplace—and we did speak about the union's inclusion on principal selection panels—if a principal already in the school chooses not to actively promote unionism in their school or encourage union participation, are they in breach of their duty under Labor's legislation to encourage union membership or are they just in breach of their position? What, if any, action can a principal expect to have taken against them if they choose not to encourage union participation?

CHAIR: Again, member, I think you have asked a hypothetical question.

Mr CRAMP: How is that hypothetical, Mr Chair? Could you clarify that for my benefit?

CHAIR: Yes.

Ms JONES: I do not know what the reference in the SDS is though. I would be interested to know.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. When you say 'if a principal', that implies that it is a hypothetical question. That is my understanding. Can I kindly ask you to rephrase your question so it is no longer hypothetical?

Mr CRAMP: I can only state, Mr Chair, that unions have been included on the selection panel and that is included in our current range of discussions.

CHAIR: I disagree with regard to the Appropriation Bill. I would not see that as being suitable.

Ms JONES: I note that the honourable member has been sitting here for four hours and the first question he asks has nothing to do with children and nothing to do with education.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

Mr CRAMP: Thank you for that personal attack, Minister. I appreciate it. You have noted, Minister, that there is a union member sitting on a principal selection panel. I am correct in that, Mr Chair, am I not?

Ms JONES: Yes. I said yes to that.

Mr CRAMP: Excellent. I had to clarify that with the chair. Minister, I note that you did state that they do speak to teachers. What level or type of expertise do these union members bring to the selection panels? Are they the local teacher representative picking a superior or are they a union organiser that comes from outside the organisation who perhaps has never been a teacher or are they teachers? It is a straightforward question.

Ms JONES: Yes. I would argue that the teachers from the Queensland Teachers' Union that are represented on those bodies bring a wealth of experience. I might get Patrea to answer this question given that she was someone who went through a panel with a Teachers' Union representative on it in her lifetime of education service.

Ms Walton: I was appointed to the position of principal at Glenala State High School and the position of principal at Corinda State High School in the early 2000s. At that time QTU representation was on the panel. I have also been on a selection panel where there has been QTU representation. I think the panel got it right on those two occasions for Glenala and Corinda, I would like to say. Thank you for the liberty to share that.

CHAIR: That is a matter of the opinion I think, Deputy Director-General!

Ms Walton: However, on a more serious note, I have been on selection panels where there has been QTU representation. I have to say that they have brought to the table, as other panellists bring to the table, very focused views around the selection of principals. My experience has been that it has not been an industrial view. I can only speak from my experience that they have been another considered member of the panel when I have been on a panel myself.

CHAIR: We have a question from the member for Albert.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, as we all know, the Great Results Guarantee funding model certainly empowered our education leaders, our principals and our staff to cater for the needs of the school community. My question to you is: how many specialist teachers were actually hired under the Great Results Guarantee funding model?

Ms JONES: You started your question talking about Great Teachers = Great Results. Are you talking about that or the Great Results Guarantee?

Mr BOOTHMAN: Great Results Guarantee.

Ms JONES: It is in the SDS. I do not know what page. We can get you the page. I think what is really important to note here is that, as I said earlier, when you provide funding directly to schools to make a decision about how they are going to spend that resourcing, the decision that local schools make is that they want to invest in their resources and they want to invest in additional staff in their schools. That is why we went to the election very clearly saying that, knowing that Queensland is going to grow and knowing that we are going to need additional teachers, our clear—it is in the SDS. It is under the table. Do you have the page?

Mr Hunt: It is on page 20, I believe, Minister.

Ms JONES: It is on page 20.

Mr Black: It is in the notes.

Ms JONES: I know. I have read it.

Mr Black: It is a footnote to the staffing table.

Ms JONES: Yes, I know. I have seen it. It is on page 20.

Mr BOOTHMAN: Minister, there has certainly been a lot of discussion today about the fact that you have rung up principals from places like Roma. You have obviously been ringing up the director-general at 10 o'clock at night, maybe ruining his beauty sleep. He is looking very stressed today. The previous minister had a very good program of principal round tables. Have you undertaken any principal round tables, because it is far more efficient way of getting out there—

Ms JONES: I have. I have done a number of principal round tables. I did one—I do not think it was in the member for Everton's electorate; I think it was just past his electorate. Yes, absolutely, I have done those and I will continue to do those. Similarly, I have gone to principals association meetings. I had the great privilege in the first two weeks of being the minister of going to the principals association of Queensland's state conference, I think it is called, which meets every second year. There were more than 1,000 principals from across Queensland there. All the feedback that I have had is that my address, which focused on the value of our principals and which focused on the value of our teachers and the good work that they are doing, was very well received. In actual fact, as I continue to go to schools today, I am still getting very positive feedback from principals about that address. That is in stark contrast, I understand, to the previous minister. Yes, I will continue to do those round tables. Since you brought up the actions of the previous minister, I think it is fitting that you talk about prioritisation. I think it beggars belief that he could prioritise meeting with people like Santo Santoro three times and not bothering to meet with the child protection education—

Mr CRAMP: How is this relevant? Haven't we already been through this?

Ms JONES: Because he talked about prioritisation of time.

Mr CRAMP: I don't believe you.

Ms JONES: He said, 'Isn't that a better prioritisation of time?'

Mr BOOTHMAN: I was talking about principal round tables.

Ms JONES: And I said, yes, I will continue to do them.

Mr CRAMP: Considering time is of the essence, answer the question.

Mr BOOTHMAN: I am sure you have had plenty of meetings with union leaders. So perhaps we should—

CHAIR: Order! Can we allow the minister to answer the question?

Ms JONES: I am just saying that in your comments and you chose to interject—

Mr CRAMP: You need to answer the question.

CHAIR: Excuse me, member for Gaven. I am the chair, not you.

Ms JONES: What I am responding to is an interjection that the honourable member made. So if he had not made the interjection, I would not have commented in response. He made the interjection that it was about prioritising time. I am saying, as we finish this estimates hearing, that when you look at your responsibility as the education minister one would say that you would prioritise your time to meet with the child protection education implementation committee above meeting with Santo Santoro three times. I stand by that comment.

CHAIR: We have one last question for today. I call the member for Toowoomba South.

Dr McVEIGH: Minister, you would be aware of the Premier's Anzac prize that has been provided under the former government. Can I ask whether the current government plans to continue that in 2016?

Ms JONES: Yes.

Dr McVEIGH: And can you advise, if you have the information, how many students would be able to participate in 2016?

Ms JONES: I am happy to get you the number of students who will participate. When we farewelled the students to go on the centenary acknowledgement of Anzac Day this year, we did publicly announce that we would continue the program going forward. From memory—I am happy to get you the details—there was under the previous government a decision to have a cohort in 2013 and 2014 that remained the same and it then went up for the centenary year. My understanding of the current situation is that we are proposing to most likely go back to the normal allocation of funding for that program and not that of the special centenary year that was boosted quite rightly by the previous government for the special centenary year recognition.

Dr McVEIGH: Finally, Minister, I welcome your earlier comments about the importance of focusing on education in the regions, as you referred to in your responses to a number of questions. Can I ask in relation to that what steps are being undertaken to ensure the quality of distance education material and certainly learning standards for children in distance education?

Ms JONES: One of the opportunities I have had since I became the minister was to go to Charleville and Longreach and sit around, in a table setting, with parents of students who participate in distance education. I also went to the distance education school there where once a term they have an opportunity to come together as students, so they get an opportunity to mix. I heard firsthand their concerns about how important it is to come together as a group and we will continue to provide funding for that.

If there are things that you would like me to look at in addition to the assistance that is currently provided for distance education, I am happy to have a conversation with the honourable member about that. I reiterate my comments and once again I acknowledge your genuine concern that all students, no matter where they live in Queensland, should get access to good quality education and that includes distance education. That is why I have made it a priority to go and meet with parents and talk directly to mothers of students who are facing a real challenge in regard to helping to educate their students but also in many cases run a property and, as you would know, at the moment many of them are experiencing drought.

We did announce at the time additional funding to subsidise that program. We provided funding for families so they could have the opportunity for students to come together once a term to sit down with their peers. I have had a lot of beautiful moments in my time as Minister for Education, and one of them was seeing those young kids come together and those parents—predominantly mums or all mums at this meeting—having the opportunity to sit around and talk about the challenges they face and just to get away, even for one day a term, from the isolation that many of them feel.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of the expenditure of the portfolio of Education has expired. On behalf of the committee, Minister, I thank you, the director-general and officials for your attendance. Minister, I am not too sure whether you are aware that you have done nearly seven hours of continuous talking. The transcript of this session of the hearing will be available on the Hansard page of the parliamentary website this evening.

We do not have any questions on notice in this particular session. I think there was one question on notice during the day and you have until 5 pm Thursday, 27 August to respond. This completes the committee's hearing on the matters referred to it by the parliament. Before I conclude, on behalf of the committee, I thank the Hansard staff, the secretariat and the attendants for your assistance. Thank you all. I declare this public hearing closed.

Ms JONES: With your indulgence, can I say thank you—and I am sure everyone shares this view—to all of the departmental staff and parliamentary staff who have helped make today possible. I appreciate that. Thank you, members.

Committee adjourned at 5.46 pm