

## MONDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2020

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### ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—ATTORNEY- GENERAL, JUSTICE, WOMEN AND PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

#### Estimate Committee Members

Mr PS Russo (Chair)  
Mrs LJ Gerber  
Ms SL Bolton  
Ms JM Bush  
Mr JE Hunt  
Mr AC Powell

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#### Members in Attendance

Ms FS Simpson  
Mr TJ Nicholls  
Mr MC Berkman  
Ms RM Bates  
Ms A Camm  
Dr A MacMahon  
Mr DR Last

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#### In Attendance

Hon. SM Fentiman, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Ms L Fraser Hardy, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**

Mr D Mackie, Director-General

Ms C Scott, Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services Branch, Corporate Services

#### **Crime and Corruption Commission**

Mr A MacSporran QC, Chairperson

#### **Electoral Commission of Queensland**


Mr P Vidgen, Electoral Commissioner

#### **The Public Trustee of Queensland**

Mr S Zhouand, Acting Public Trustee of Queensland

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**The committee met at 9.00 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare the hearing of estimates for the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee open. I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we meet today. My name is Peter Russo, the member for Toohey and chair of the committee. Mrs Laura Gerber, the

member for Currumbin, is the deputy chair. The other committee members are: Ms Sandy Bolton, the member for Noosa, Ms Jonty Bush, the member for Cooper, Mr Jason Hunt, the member for Caloundra, and Mr Andrew Powell, the member for Glass House. The committee has granted leave for non-committee members to ask questions at the hearing today, so other members may be present over the course of the proceedings. Today, the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill (2020-21) 2020 and the estimates for the committee's areas of responsibility.

I remind everyone present that any person may be excluded from the proceedings at my discretion as the chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that mobile phones or other electronic devices be turned off or switched to silent mode. Also, I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

This year, the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearings. Please ensure that you leave the chamber following the examination of your portfolio areas as quickly as possible so the committee can adhere to the set schedule. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies from 9 to 10.30; Justice and Attorney-General from 10.45 to 12.45, Police from 1.30 to 2.45; Corrective Services from 3 to 4 pm, Fire and Emergency Services from 4.15 to 5.15.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill (2020-21) 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence. The committee will examine the Attorney-General's portfolio until 12.45 and will suspend proceedings during this time for a short break between 10.30 and 10.45. I would also like to welcome Mr Tim Nicholls MP, the member for Clayfield, and Ms Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydore.

I remind those present today that the committee's proceedings are proceedings of the Queensland parliament and are subject to the standing rules and orders of the parliament. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament also apply in this hearing. I refer to standing orders 112 and 115 in this regard. Questions should be brief and relate to one issue and should not contain lengthy or subjective preambles, argument or opinion.

I intend to guide these proceedings today so that the relevant issues can be explored fully without imposing artificial time limits and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee and visiting members. On behalf of the committee, I welcome the Attorney-General and director-general, department officers and members of the public to the hearing. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Attorney-General or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of Justice and Attorney-General and associated statutory bodies open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Attorney-General, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than five minutes. Thank you.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, Chair, and good morning to yourself and committee members. Can I start by saying what a privilege it is to be sitting here as Attorney-General to deliver my first report on the budget for the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. I am also excited about bringing to the portfolio the responsibilities of women and the prevention of domestic and family violence together with justice. I believe it will be of great benefit to the Queensland community.

The budget for 2020-21 will continue the important work done in the last term of the Palaszczuk government in fostering safer communities and contributing to keeping Queenslanders safe. It will also continue with the exceptional work that was done and is continuing in the time of COVID-19. The global pandemic has had a huge impact on all of our professional and private lives during 2020. We saw an increase in demand for legal services and the subsequent need for adaptability by the justice department to respond rapidly to changing environments. In tough economic times, people need to have confidence in our legal system.

The department and associated statutory bodies went above and beyond to support Queenslanders. Queensland renters who had an issue with their property who were faced with an eviction or at risk of homelessness went to Tenancy Queensland for help. We introduced support for

small business operators during the time of COVID-19 such as allowing licensed venues to sell takeaway liquor. The Office of Fair Trading assisted many Queenslanders who could not travel because of lockdowns and border restrictions.

Queensland legal practitioners were able to use videoconferencing technology to conduct a range of transactions that usually required face-to-face meetings, while coronavirus social distancing requirements remained in place thanks to the Palaszczuk government quickly enacting legislation to support these new ways of working. It enabled the legal profession and community at large to continue to conduct important legal affairs, particularly with respect to end-of-life decision-making and estate planning. Courts used tele and videoconferencing to ensure the system did not get bogged down. It is most appropriate that the \$9.3 million will be spent on further upgrading audiovisual capacity in the justice system.

With the Office for Women and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence now under the umbrella of Justice and Attorney-General, the Palaszczuk government has allocated \$152 million to these two critical areas across government for this financial year. There has been an enormous amount of work and resources devoted to responding to domestic and family violence over the last five years since the release of the groundbreaking *Not now, not ever* report. The recommendations set the vision and direction to bring an end to domestic and family violence.

This year we will see \$48.5 million committed to counselling and crisis responses to ensure the safety of women and children, court based support to victims and perpetrators, service system coordination, and specialist responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Some \$34.3 million will be invested in women's shelters and mobile, centre based support services. Since 2015, seven new women's shelters have been funded in regional, remote and urban areas, the first new shelters in Queensland in over 20 years.

The significant support extends to those experiencing sexual violence with \$11.8 million being spent on 33 specialist sexual violence support services, a 95 per cent increase since 2015. Some \$8.4 million has been allocated to 21 women's health and wellbeing services, the number of providers having more than doubled over the last three years. The government will continue its strong response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse through the allocation of \$8.6 million and 15 full-time equivalent positions over four years to implement recommendations. In addition, \$13.89 million and 86 full-time equivalent positions will help maintain the current child protection litigation model for a further 12 months. Queensland's blue card system, already acknowledged as one of the strongest in the country, will continue to provide the best possible protection for children. Another major government initiative, the Tackling Alcohol Fuelled Violence Policy, will continue to be supported in 2020-21.

Chair and committee members, I look forward to building on the strong foundations laid in the 2020-21 Queensland budget. This portfolio touches so many Queenslanders' lives and, as their Attorney-General, I will ensure that Queensland's justice system remains fair and accessible. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Currumbin and deputy chair.

**Mrs GERBER:** I will defer my first question to the shadow Attorney-General.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks Attorney-General and staff. Welcome along—something we are all looking forward to as the rain falls and Christmas approaches, no doubt about it. Attorney, my first question to you is in relation to your use of private email and whether you have used a private email account for government business. If so, have you done so since the ministerial code of conduct has been changed?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I do have a personal email. I do not use it for work purposes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Have you sent an email to the Premier's private email account—or the former private email account stacia1 @ bigpond.com?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No, I have not.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Then we might, if we could, please, given the time frames, ask for Mr MacSporran to come forward to answer a few questions.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr MacSporran, good morning. Was the CCC aware that an email had been sent from the member for Miller's mangocube private email account to stacia1 @ bigpond.com throughout the investigation into Minister Bailey's deleted private email account?

**Mr MacSporran:** In answer to your question, we were not aware at the time we did the investigation. Having said that, the inquiries we have made since did reveal that the private emails of various ministers, including the Premier, were in fact in the bundle recovered from Mr Bailey's email account. Because of the way the protocol was designed to code the various categories for our interest, that email—the Premier's that you are referring to—was deemed not to be relevant to our inquiries. Having now seen the content of it I can understand why, but we did not directly assess it during the course of that initial investigation, no.

**Ms SIMPSON:** You say you did not deem it to be of interest. Was there a reply email from the Premier?

**Mr MacSporran:** I am not aware of one.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Did the CCC access the emails directly or did they rely on ministerial offices to supply these emails?

**Mr MacSporran:** I think we recovered them with Mr Bailey's cooperation, to recover his private email account that went back many years, actually—back as far as 2012, from memory. There were many thousands of them, so we had to develop a protocol to code them. That was not done directly; it was done by Crown Law, from memory. What was coded and came to us for assessment we went through, and we assessed all those emails individually. As you know, the conclusion we reached was that, whilst it is not desirable to use a private email account for business, none of the content revealed any nefarious purpose for doing so. So it was not corrupt conduct as such but we recommended—and the recommendation was followed—to cease the practice and beef up the code of conduct.

**Ms SIMPSON:** If I could clarify, you have not directly sought advice from the Premier about whether she has used her stacia1 @ bigpond.com account for public purposes?

**Mr MacSporran:** No, we have not.

**Ms SIMPSON:** In light of the email allegedly from Mr Bailey's email account of April 2015 indicating a contact with the Premier, is there another issue in regard to whether the Premier may have breached ministerial integrity rules, which is another issue?

**Mr MacSporran:** I do not see it in the content of the email, no, frankly.

**Ms SIMPSON:** You have not sought confirmation from the Premier about whether she has replied to Minister Bailey's email account and we do not have veracity or a clear line of evidence to confirm that no emails had been sent from the Premier?

**Mr MacSporran:** No, we do not.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Would the commissioner believe, to rule this out as having occurred and being inappropriate, that it would be necessary to seek that advice from the Premier?

**Mr MacSporran:** Possibly, but, as I say, the content that we have seen—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, could you rephrase the question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** My follow-up question is to the commissioner. The CCC report into the principal selection for the ICSSSC stated at page 55 that the then deputy premier met with a potential applicant as a favour to a member of parliament. Last week when we asked the education minister who the mystery MP was, she said to ask the CCC. Mr MacSporran, who was the mystery MP mentioned in your report?

**Mr MacSporran:** Could I just place in context the reasons I do not think it is appropriate for me to reveal that identity. When we produced our public report, you will see that we took great care to name only those persons we required to in context, either through identifying wrongdoing or as a necessary part of the narrative or as names that were already well known in the public arena. We did not name the MP because, as the report itself reveals on page 55, there was no suggestion, nor could there be, that there was any wrongdoing on the part of that MP in seeking to have a constituent of hers, who had approached her for an introduction to the local MP in the new school area, which happened to be the then deputy premier, Jackie Trad, for a meeting to assess the dynamics of the electorate rather than anything more nefarious. That is what happened. There was no even hint of wrongdoing on the part of the MP; hence, we did not name that person. Likewise, we did not name the person who sought the introduction and had the meeting. That process is done very carefully not to excite interest where it should not exist or to invite speculation. I do not think, frankly, it is an appropriate thing for me to do at this stage, given that background, to actually name that person.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Just to make it clear, Mr MacSporran, it is the case that you do not wish to name the MP referred to in that report for the reasons you have just given to us?

**Mr MacSporran:** That is so, Mr Nicholls, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr MacSporran, prior to the election occurring you issued a missive to all people participating in that election warning of the dangers of becoming too close to business, lobbyists and other groups. Subsequently last week you have issued another statement as a part of anti-corruption week, if you like—corruption awareness week. In light of revelations that have been made regarding a former ALP state secretary, Mr Milner, and another former ALP state secretary, Mr Moorhead, and particularly Mr Milner's being ensconced on level 1 at 1 William Street, can you say that that is the type of practice of which you are concerned and which your letters or warnings were directed to?

**Mr MacSporran:** I think it is fair to say that the entire area, as we have said publicly many times, in respect of lobbying and the nature of relationships between government and the private sector, constitutes in one form or another a corruption risk. I do not want to talk about individual cases of the kind that you have mentioned because we have not assessed them. There has been no complaint about it and, until there is or unless it became obvious in the public statements about it that there was something to look at, we would not ordinarily go down that path. It is an area of interest. I was encouraged to see what the Integrity Commissioner, Dr Nikola Stepanov, said about the review of her act proposed to deal with that issue.

As my public statements reveal, that is going to be an area of focus for us, I suspect, for some time to come and we will be doing more work in that space. We have not yet started that project, other than to send out the missives I have, which are fairly generic and self-explanatory. It is an area of concern that we propose to monitor very closely and do some more work in, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Without reference to the specifics of Mr Milner and Mr Moorhead and so on, would it be of concern to you if it was a practice that members of a political party who also were lobbyists were regularly ensconced or had access to ministers' officers or departmental officers?

**Mr MacSporran:** At a level, yes, but it might depend upon the arrangements. There can be safeguards put in place that should be put in place to protect the integrity of those arrangements. The difficulty of course is that, irrespective of whether there is anything actually corrupt happening, of greater concern really across the public sector is the perception of the arrangements, and that is why there needs to be some very transparent safeguards put in place that people can be confident are being followed so that there is no opportunity unduly to be availed to engage in corrupt conduct. That is the sort of thing that we are concerned about—what the arrangements are, the transparency of them and whether the safeguards are sufficient.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Sure. Would safeguards, for example, include the director-general of a department being aware of those people coming in and having knowledge of what they are doing and where they are going to sit and how they are going to behave and have access to computers?

**Mr MacSporran:** It may do. I would not wish to be constrained to a certain set of guidelines without giving full consideration to what might be necessary.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** No, I was not asking you that; I was saying 'may'.

**Mr MacSporran:** May. It may not be necessary. There may be other arrangements that can be put in place to provide a person to fulfil that role without taking the director-general out of his or her busy schedule to engage in some guideline of that kind.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. I now turn to another matter which has excited some interest recently. Last week Minister Bailey advised in an answer to a question to his committee that there is an investigation underway in relation to allegations concerning the former lord mayor of Brisbane Jim Soorley and his involvement with both the former deputy premier Jackie Trad and the transport minister, Minister Bailey. Noting the difficulties with the language regarding assessment and investigation, is this a matter that is under consideration by the CCC at the current time and can you advise us how that is progressing?

**Mr MacSporran:** It is in the public arena that there has been a complaint made to us about those arrangements—that conduct—and it is a matter that is under consideration by the commission, and for that reason we have changed our protocols such that internally we have a distinction between assessment and investigation for obvious reasons. It is just a stage in the process. We found that unfortunately to use that terminology publicly just excites unnecessary interest in what stage we have reached, where it is at and, more particularly, if we quite innocently indicate that it has moved from assessment to investigation everyone assumes that there is some wrongdoing that has been uncovered

and that is not necessarily the case. Now publicly, as here, I am saying, as you carefully put the question, that the matter is under consideration, but I cannot speak otherwise publicly about where it is at.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. I turn now to the matter of the former public trustee, Mr Carne. Noting the outcome of the investigation into Mr Carne, and I am cautious also of my role in another position before this one, can I ask—

**CHAIR:** Excuse me, member. Before we continue, as the chair I have to ensure that questions and information being sought are relevant to the committee's inquiry into the appropriation bills.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr Chair; I am fully cognisant of that. Mr MacSporran, the Public Trustee is a publicly organised operation and it provides services to the public. It is reported on in the budget papers. The position of Public Trustee is set out in section 9 of the Public Trustee Act. There has been an investigation into the performance by the Public Trustee of his office, including his supervision of the expenditure of funds, and I think it is something in the order of \$3 billion in the common fund that is administered by the Public Trustee. It was the case that you conducted an investigation and, whilst no criminal charges followed as a result of that, other actions took place. Can you advise whether the CCC made recommendations to the former attorney-general with respect to Mr Carne's conduct?

**Mr MacSporran:** We took the rather unusual step whilst we were investigating, because of the nature of the conduct that we had uncovered as part of our inquiry, to disseminate all of that material to the attorney for her information. As you know, and it is publicly known, the attorney then quite appropriately took the step to issue show cause proceedings against Mr Carne. One of the purposes of disseminating that material was to enlighten the attorney about the sort of conduct that had been engaged in and to give her the opportunity to review the operation of the office and to put in place measures that would hopefully ensure that that conduct was not allowed to occur again. So I cannot tell you whether we made specific recommendations, but the whole purpose of dissemination was to, as I say, enlighten the attorney about the need to do something in that area.

That whole show cause process was stymied, as it were, when Mr Carne resigned his position, I think it was, at the end of July this year and unfortunately, unlike other public sector leaders, there is no ability to pursue a post separation declaration about that conduct. So in terms of the whole show cause proceedings and ventilation of those issues, including, I might add, to give Mr Carne an opportunity to put his side of the argument, none of that was progressed. Our investigation has concluded. After that, as you know and as we have said, no criminal charges were laid. However, we are not quite finished with the matter yet and it is at a stage where I am not at liberty to discuss what is happening with it other than to say it is not concluded, but we hope it will be in the near future.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you, Mr MacSporran. A report in the *Courier-Mail* on 13 August says that this is what the allegations consisted of: they related to him being intoxicated in the workplace during work hours, being absent from the workplace during work hours where there appears to be no excuse to do so, being absent from duty without leave, conflict of interests, bullying staff and a number of other matters. These, I think, were documents that were filed in the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission. Given that those allegations are contained in the show cause notice that is in the public realm in the Industrial Relations Commission, are you in a position to confirm that they are in fact the concerns that were raised by you with the attorney-general at the time?

**Mr MacSporran:** They are. I think the nature of them, as you have outlined, just reinforced what I said a moment ago—that is, we took the rather unusual step during the course of the investigation to disseminate that information to the attorney as a matter of urgency because clearly on the basis of those allegations it would appear that the workplace culture was toxic and it was not fair to the staff to allow it to continue, so urgent action had to be taken and it was taken by the attorney to put in place measures to improve the culture there.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you. If I can ask the Attorney-General then—and bearing in mind, Attorney, that you were not the Attorney-General at the time, perhaps Mr Mackie may be able to answer this one as well—it is the case that the former attorney received recommendations from the Crime and Corruption Commission in relation to Mr Carne's conduct. It is the case that the former attorney issued a show cause notice in respect of that—I think that was on 13 June 2019—and it is the case that, no response having been received to that show cause notice that we are aware of, Mr Carne resigned on 31 July in relation to that position as reported in the media. Mr Carne is reported to have received \$385,000 in payment during that period of time. Can you confirm that that is the correct amount and

can you confirm or advise why the delay in resolving the show cause notice of over a year and is that acceptable?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I would have to ask the director-general to respond.

**Mr Mackie:** Thank you, member, for the question. I cannot verify the actual figure, but I do know that Mr Carne was continued to be paid while he was on suspension and I think I can say that from a CCC perspective there were volumes of documentation relating to the reference that the CCC made to the attorney at the time and it took some period of time to digest that and get positions on particular matters that were included in that before a show cause notice could be issued.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But the show cause notice was issued back in June 2019. Mr Carne resigned on 31 July 2020. That is over a year. That is not the process of assessing information and assuming a show cause notice. That is the period of processing it to the end. Why did that take a year and were any steps taken to investigate whether Mr Carne should in fact be paid during that process?

**Mr Mackie:** Again, the former Attorney-General was the decision-maker in this. I was on the periphery of it, of course. The process for issuing a show cause has a number of gates to go through in terms of natural justice processes. Mr Carne had a right of response. The right of response to that show cause notice over that period of time was quite significant and lengthy as well. I think it was just a matter that the volume and the nature of the matters that the Attorney had to consider through that whole process was voluminous and obviously she wanted to get it right from a natural justice perspective.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is it the case that Mr Carne then made responses that were lengthy and voluminous that would have caused the Attorney-General to delay making a decision in relation to the show cause notice?

**Mr Mackie:** I know she did not delay making a decision. I know that there was very careful analysis of the information that was being put to her, both in the CCC report and in the responses from Mr Carne, that obviously she needed to get advice on.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You previously said there was voluminous material from Mr Carne. Was there voluminous material from Mr Carne in relation to the show cause notice?

**Mr Mackie:** I did not actually see the amount, but I know that it was quite significant.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Who would have seen that material? You are the director-general. If it is not you, who would have seen it? Someone in the department must have been seeing it.

**Mr Mackie:** The Attorney-General would have, I believe, taken advice from Crown Law.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Were there any other aspects of expenditure other than the payment to Mr Carne of his entitlements—that is, his salary, which is reported at \$385,000—during his term as Public Trustee that are being sought to be recovered in any way, shape or form as a result of Mr Carne's actions?

**Mr Mackie:** I am unaware if anything is trying to be recovered from Mr Carne. I could not answer that question.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Did Mr Carne receive any other additional payments during his period from 2016 through to 2019?

**Mr Mackie:** All I can say I know, member, in terms of responding to that question, was that he was doing external education, which was, I think, at QUT over that period of time so there would have been some educational payments in that.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** How much would that have been?

**Mr Mackie:** I am unaware of that, I am sorry, member.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is anyone aware of it?

**Mr Mackie:** I believe the CCC—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Should we ask the current Public Trustee to come forward and see if he is aware of it? Are you aware of how much was paid to Mr Carne in relation to the education matters that were raised by Mr Mackie and the total of payments that have been made?

**Mr Zhouand:** I am not aware of the specific amounts, but subject to the Attorney-General's endorsement we can get that information.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** You will take that question on notice and respond to us with the amount paid?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We will try to get back to you at the end of the session with that figure.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr MacSporran, if I can return to you. An issue of concern to the CCC in the past has been in relation to public servants who have been under investigation or show cause notices. We have had, for example, the case of the Chief Scientist. That matter took two and a half years to reach conclusion and, of course, the Chief Scientist was subsequently convicted. Do you have a view in respect of the appropriateness of people in senior and significant positions continuing to be paid over lengthy periods of time and is it considered appropriate in those circumstances?

**Mr MacSporran:** I do have significant concerns about that, but bear in mind, as has been alluded to by Mr Mackie, there is a natural justice process to follow. Oddly enough, it is a little easier, I think, where a criminal charge is laid because then what normally happens is the public servant is stood down with pay and then if it is an indictable offence there is a committal proceeding to be had. Then if someone is committed for trial, which means a judicial officer has determined that the evidence is, at a prima facie level, sufficient to place the person before a judge and jury, the normal process then, under the protocol, would be that that person then is stood down without pay. That has some ameliorating effect on the wastage or expenditure of public moneys.

However, where there is no criminal charge and it is purely an internal disciplinary matter, I think the only answer, frankly, to preserve the natural justice aspects of it, is to make the process of dealing with that issue much more efficient. I can say from personal knowledge that the Public Trustee matter was extremely complex. I know that after we disseminated the voluminous material to the Attorney's office there were several approaches back to us for further information, further clarification, further evidence, and that process went on for some months. It was no fault of anyone's, it was just a very complex large matter. At the end of the day—and the Chief Scientist is the best example of it, that went for over a year where she had been charged with two serious criminal offences of fraud to which she ultimately pleaded guilty—I think there needs to be some greater attention paid to the efficiency of having those matters dealt with internally if at all possible.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In summary, to you, Mr Mackie, as the director-general, on 13 June 2019 the former attorney-general said the Governor in Council had, on her recommendation, suspended the Public Trustee, Mr Carne, pending a show cause notice. The show cause notice was issued in or around June. The show cause notice process was continuing when Mr Carne resigned on 31 July 2020, over a year later. During that period he received his full entitlements and during that period you were not aware of the details of the actions being taken in relation to the Public Trustee, but Crown Law may have. Did you see the Crown Law advice as director-general in relation to the position of the former Public Trustee, Peter Carne?

**Mr Mackie:** Thank you, member, for the question. Just to set the context there, given that the Public Trustee is a chief executive in their own right and has a relationship reporting-wise with the Attorney-General, I am not involved in the actual matter itself.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But as director-general you are involved in those things. That is what directors-general are there for.

**Mr Mackie:** We do get involved in certain things, but this was a decision-making responsibility of the Attorney-General.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I am not arguing that, but did you see the Crown Law advice?

**Mr Mackie:** I have not seen the full Crown Law advice.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Have you seen a summary of it, an executive summary?

**Mr Mackie:** I saw components of it during the time, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Presumably that contains the highlights of the matter. It does not deal with the trivialities of the matter if you are seeing the executive summary.

**Mr Mackie:** What do you mean by highlights of the matter?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The main components of the advice will have been what you saw.

**Mr Mackie:** Yes, probably.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Including recommendations and those sorts of things.

**Mr Mackie:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Was there any recommendation to try to recover funds from Mr Carne as a result?

**Mr Mackie:** I cannot remember at the time if there was actually a recommendation to recover any moneys involved in Mr Carne's employment remuneration.



**Mr NICHOLLS:** Was it discussed?

**Mr Mackie:** Not with me, no.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Not in the brief?

**Mr Mackie:** I cannot recall if it was in the brief or not, but I know in terms of the educational component of that investigation, the CCC were actually dealing with it as the fundamental agency looking at it.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you.

**Ms BOLTON:** Good morning, everybody. My question is to the Attorney-General. Within the allocations to the ECQ, what provision has been made to review legislation governing the content of election materials and advertising as well as the misleading replied paid envelopes to do with postal vote applications?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I will get that advice. Member for Noosa, I think you have written to me about this issue?

**Ms BOLTON:** Yes, I have and I am additionally asking when that will occur, given the circumstances of the last elections?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I will endeavour to get that to you by the end of the session.

**Ms BOLTON:** Wonderful, thank you. Attorney, given the unprecedented demand for housing for families experiencing domestic and family violence, particularly women over 55, within the budget what allocation is there to work with the department of housing and also to make provision for those who are not eligible for public housing?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As far as I am aware, the committee has determined to deal with matters relating to the Domestic and Family Violence portfolio in the second session. I am very happy to come back to that as soon as we can. There is a significant contribution to deal with housing for victims in the budget. I would love to tell you about it when it is appropriate to do so.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. Attorney, can you please advise if there has been an increase in the budget allocations for community legal centres and who that is to?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I think we are dealing with community legal centres in the Justice part of the examination of the budget. Again, I am very pleased to tell you that there has been an increase in funding to our community legal centres, but I am happy to go through that in the next session.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. I will hand over to the member for Maiwar.

**CHAIR:** I welcome Mr Berkman to the estimates hearing. I understand you have one question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you, Chair. I have a couple, if I can fit them in. Part of the government's previous consultation on body corporate reforms has been raised by constituents of mine who are dealing with some really unjust provisions inserted by a developer in their building's building management statement. I have a couple of questions to the DG, linked to that.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am sorry, member: this is to do with body corporate and property law reform?

**Mr BERKMAN:** It relates to building management statements.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Again, this is the session for statutory bodies. We are dealing with Justice and Attorney-General portfolio matters in the next session. Again, I am very happy to talk to you about that. We have some election commitments around body corporate law reform and the review of the Property Law Act, which I am very happy to take you through.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Hopefully we can allocate time for this in the next session, Chair.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Chair, we are happy to ask a few more questions if the crossbench are not.

**CHAIR:** No, member. We are going to government members now. I call the member for Caloundra.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, I have some questions for the Commissioner of the Electoral Commission. I ask that the commissioner come forward, please. Commissioner, I refer to page 93 of the SDS, in particular, the commission ensuring adherence to electoral law. It was reported in October that the LNP referred certain donations to the ECQ for further consideration as to whether prohibited donor laws may have been breached. Chair, I will table these documents. There should be sufficient copies for everyone.

Commissioner, can you confirm you are investigating these donations and when this investigation began?

**Mr Vidgen:** At the outset, I think it is important to reaffirm the position of the commission in relation to our funding disclosure requirements in so far as we do conduct them on a confidential basis, primarily to ensure that there is no reputational damage to anyone or any party in terms of matters that we might be assessing or, indeed, considering in terms of formal action. That is the position that the commission takes. I would like to talk about the Prohibited Donors Scheme in terms of the Electoral Commission and how we implement that system.

The commission has been implementing successfully the Prohibited Donors Scheme since October 2018. As members would be aware, the scheme prohibits political donations by property developers to reinforce the integrity of the electoral system and minimise corruption risks at both state and local government levels. To implement the scheme, the ECQ proactively engages with stakeholders, including councillors or registered political parties and industry groups to educate them about their obligations. The ECQ monitors real-time disclosures and collects information from state and local agencies to assist in identifying potential prohibited donors. The ECQ supports affected stakeholders to achieve compliance and takes action, as necessary.

In the years 2019-20, the ECQ made determinations about the prohibited donor status of 20 entities and issued debt recovery notices totalling nearly \$33,000 for donations identified as being from prohibited donors. The ECQ will defend the integrity of the scheme in the court as required.

In 2020, the Australian Institute for Progress sought a declaration from the Supreme Court about whether a third party that incurred electoral expenditure on its own behalf could accept donations from prohibited donors. On 30 March 2020 the Supreme Court held that third parties such as the Australian Institute for Progress could not use donations from property developers to incur electoral expenditure, even if that expenditure was occurred on its behalf, affirming the ECQ's interpretation of the provisions.

To conclude, I think it is important to note that the commission needs to exercise its significant authority under the act in a very careful and considered manner. We do not respond recklessly to information. We deal with facts and we deal with evidence and we will go through due process in terms of how we conduct ourselves. In regards to the specific answer to the question, I do not want to confirm or deny what we are doing in that space, but the committee should rest assured that the commission undertakes its responsibilities very seriously and very thoroughly and is an evidence-based process.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, I refer to page 94 of the SDS and compliance with the electoral laws. Can you update the committee on developments concerning prohibited property developer donations?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The CCC report *Operation Belcarra—A blueprint for integrity and addressing corruption risk in local government* made 31 recommendations to improve the integrity of our electoral system. One of those recommendations was the banning of donations from property developers to candidates and councillors. At the time, the Premier indicated that she was not prepared to make a rule for local government that she would not follow herself. Additionally, the state plays a pivotal role in planning schemes and the ban was extended to state politics.

The CCC noted that the risk of corruption does not extend to other sectors and a wider ban was not justified. The Prohibited Donors Scheme was opposed by the opposition. Recently, members may be aware, the ECQ filed an application in the Supreme Court seeking to have declared a prohibited property developer under the scheme. If the application is successful, the ECQ would be able to commence recovery proceedings against Palmer Leisure. We know that there is a strong link between the LNP, Clive Palmer and the United Australia Party and, of course, we all know that recently Mr Dave Hutchinson worked for Clive Palmer while still president of the LNP.

In conclusion, I am very proud of our strong track record on integrity. I think it speaks for itself, as opposed to those opposite.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, I refer to page 83 of the SDS. Can you update the committee on what work the Office of the Information Commissioner has done to protect the personal information of domestic and family violence victims?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are doing everything we can to protect the privacy of domestic and family violence victims. It is something that is incredibly critical. As I said earlier, we have an enormous budget of \$152 million just this financial year. We are incredibly proud of our track record and we are doing everything we can to ensure the privacy of domestic and family violence victims. Of course, the member would know, from her extensive work in Victims Assist, that we are doing everything that we can in this

space. Again I think having specialist courts with training is part of making sure that we are doing everything we can to protect victims.

There is a lot of work happening with the Office of the Information Commissioner. In fact, recently they did bring in DVConnect to do training for all of their staff so that they could be proactive in this space and work across government to provide support for public servants in making sure that they understand the importance of privacy, particularly when it comes to domestic and family violence victims. I want to congratulate the Information Commissioner and her office for being so proactive and working so closely with the sector.

**Mr HUNT:** If I could just call back the Commissioner of the Electoral Commission. With reference to your previous answer, I have a follow-up question: did you conduct the investigation before or after being contacted by the LNP?

**Mr Vidgen:** Just to confirm my previous answer to that, the commission gets informed formally and informally about a range of matters by a range of people. We make a determination on what action we will take with the information we receive based on the factual nature of what we receive and the evidence before us. When we do that, we will often consult relevant parties such as the CCC on certain matters. Because those matters can ultimately lead to significant consequences for those involved, we, as a matter of practice, deal with those issues in a very careful and confidential way.

In regards to the matter you have referred to, that is something which obviously was reported during the election period by the media in regard to what was occurring, and I think there were some public statements attributed to certain political stakeholders in that process. The position the commission took, and I will continue to take, in regards to that matter is that we are not talking about it publicly; we are not confirming nor denying anything in terms of what may have been referred to us or what action we might be taking based on the grounds that it is important that when we do exercise our priority, it is done so in a way that natural justice is afforded to all parties involved in the matter.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, I refer to page 80 of the SDS. Could you advise how Legal Aid Queensland, through their duty lawyer service, provides legal assistance to financially disadvantaged people throughout Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know that you are proud of the Palaszczuk Labor government's proven track record on ensuring legal support is provided to Queensland's most disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. Legal Aid Queensland plays an important role in ensuring that all Queenslanders have the ability to access justice when they need it. Without adequate access to Legal Aid, those experiencing poverty, fleeing domestic violence or extreme personal hardship fall through the cracks.

When the pandemic emerged in late March, Legal Aid Queensland delivered legal services remotely across Queensland using telephone/video conferencing and electronic means. This transition ensured that Legal Aid Queensland employees were able to keep COVID-safe during the pandemic whilst continuing to provide legal assistance to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders with minimal disruption.

Legal Aid Queensland also focuses on being able to provide support and legal assistance services to those people directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst restrictions were in place across the state, Legal Aid Queensland's crisis activation team met regularly to monitor and continually plan for the delivery of essential core services to financially disadvantaged Queenslanders. I am delighted to let the committee know that in the 2020-21 budget, the Palaszczuk government has committed \$96.461 million of funding for Legal Aid Queensland in 2020-21. This includes \$1.9 million to assist Legal Aid Queensland respond to the rising demand for criminal law services. It is vital that Queenslanders experiencing personal hardship or seeking support and advice know who they can turn to in times of need. That is why the Palaszczuk government will continue to work with Legal Aid Queensland and the support services they provide to our most vulnerable.

There were a number of cuts made by the former LNP government when it came to Legal Aid, slashing \$587,000 between 2012 and 2013, and then over \$1 million from this vital service the following year, all in the name of reprioritisation. Vulnerable Queenslanders are left behind when we cut services like Legal Aid Queensland, and every Queenslanders deserves a chance to reach their full potential. I am proud to be part of a government that supports and protects Queensland's most socially and economically disadvantaged, and I want to acknowledge the entire Legal Aid Queensland team for helping members of our community get back on their feet again.

**Ms BUSH:** With reference to page 80 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General provide an update on how Legal Aid Queensland is assisting First Nation Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Legal Aid Queensland launched the *First Nations Strategic Plan 2018-22* in March 2019, focusing on four key objectives: increasing awareness and accessibility of Legal Aid Services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, becoming a centre of excellence for culturally capable legal services, becoming a significant employer of Indigenous Australians within the legal profession, and addressing the underrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the legal profession.

In relation to strategic objective No. 1—increasing awareness and accessibility of Legal Aid Services—achievements include that Legal Aid Queensland have provided a bronze scholarship for the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak conference, which assisted in building a strong relationship in the areas of child protection and early intervention; NAIDOC activities were held across 11 Legal Aid Queensland sites, including Musgrave Park in Brisbane, leading to enhanced community engagement between Legal Aid Queensland regional officers and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community members; the introduction of the Client Assistance Service within Legal Aid Queensland's contact centre enabled more time to be spent with vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients; the Legal Aid Queensland Contact Centre employed six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff as contact officers and front counter workers; and the domestic violence duty lawyer service provided services to 119 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This is 6.2 per cent of the total number of duty lawyer services provided across Queensland by Legal Aid Queensland.

In relation to strategic objective No. 2, becoming a centre of excellence for culturally capable legal services, achievements include the first phase of the cultural awareness training facilitated by an external expert, resulting in 58 per cent of Legal Aid Queensland staff undertaking the training. Phase 2 of cultural awareness training was facilitated internally and focused on the grants division and contact centre staff, and cultural capability training was delivered within the youth certification training to over 500 participants across 14 locations.

In relation to becoming a significant employer of Indigenous Australians within the legal profession, achievements include the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mentoring program; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff awards were established; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy commenced; the Indigenous employment network was established with a terms of reference; 30 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were employed at Legal Aid Queensland in 2019, representing five per cent of total employees; and 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lawyers were employed at Legal Aid Queensland both by direct appointment and through the graduate program.

In relation to addressing the underrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the legal profession, Legal Aid Queensland have developed an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander briefing policy for in-house lawyers, briefed work to external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council, and employed five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates. I am looking forward to working with the team at Legal Aid Queensland to ensure further initiatives are implemented to achieve the objectives of the strategic and operational plans.

**Mr HUNT:** I have a question for the Commissioner of the Electoral Commission. I am mindful of your previous answers and I ask: are you able to confirm what triggered the decision to scrutinise these donations?

**Mr Vidgen:** To refer back to my previous answer, at this point, neither I nor the commission has confirmed any action we may or may not be taking in regards to the matter you have raised. The important thing is to re-affirm the commission's role and our statutory powers in this very important component of compliance. I refer to my previous answer in that the commission takes its responsibilities very seriously in this regard and we are very aware that any public statements that may be made by us in regards to any action we may or may not be taking potentially has an impact on the political system and the confidence that the community might have in the political system and indeed the many stakeholders that we serve in that system, including the political parties. It is very important that the community has confidence in the commission so that in no way we can be seen to be intervening in any political conversations in regards to certain matters.

With that in mind, the commission has and will continue to take a very strict policy in regards to being absent in terms of any politic conversation in regards our funding and disclosure compliance activities. We think it is what the community would expect and certainly what all the political stakeholders would expect in terms of fair and transparent treatment for them.

**CHAIR:** I refer to page 74 of the SDS and the recent celebration of Human Rights Day on 10 December. Can the Attorney-General please advise how the Queensland Human Rights Commission has contributed to the protection and promotion of freedom, respect, equality and dignity for Queenslanders?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know how committed he is to ensuring that all Queenslanders are treated with dignity and equality and has been a long-time advocate of a human rights charter in Queensland. It was a good day when we enacted that into law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the inalienable rights which everyone is entitled to as a human being regardless of race, colour, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion; national or social origin; and property, birth or other status.

The theme for this year's Human Rights Day was 'Recover better—stand up for human rights'. It relates to the COVID-19 pandemic and focuses on the need to build back better by ensuring that human rights are central to recovery efforts. The Queensland Human Rights Act 2019 commenced in full on 1 January 2020. Not everything in 2020 was bad. This means that last Thursday, 10 December 2020 was the very first time that Queensland celebrated international Human Rights Day with the legislative protection of human rights for individuals in Queensland.

Queensland's Human Rights Act is about building a better Queensland—one that is inclusive, respectful and committed to equality. The Human Rights Act ensures that people's fundamental rights are protected in state law, including the right to education, health, privacy and free speech. It also explicitly recognises the special importance of human rights to the Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Queensland as Australia's first people and their relationship with the land and their right to self-determination.

Queensland is the first human rights jurisdiction in Australia that offers a meaningful way for individuals to resolve human rights grievances by making a complaint to the Queensland Human Rights Commission. This complaints process plays an important role in ensuring people's rights are respected, protected and promoted. Since January this year the Queensland Human Rights Commission has accepted 94 complaints and intervened in three court matters involving human rights.

The Queensland Human Rights Commission has also delivered a range of training courses to increase understanding and promote discussion of human rights and antidiscrimination law and principles. I am delighted to inform the committee that the Queensland Human Rights Commission has already delivered 446 training sessions to over 8,000 people. Last year during a Human Rights Month campaign I was amazed to see that over 92,000 people were reached across all platforms to raise awareness of human rights.

I am very pleased to say that as we rebuild the world we want, the need for solidarity as well as our interconnectedness and shared humanity is more crucial than ever. I think there are a lot of things we did differently out of COVID that we want to keep doing as we head into next year.

**CHAIR:** We will move to non-government questions.

**Mrs GERBER:** I will defer my question to the member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I should have deferred to the member for Clayfield. My question is to the Electoral Commissioner. Perhaps while he is coming to the table—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I will leap in Mr MacSporran with one more question to you. Perhaps we can deal with something that has been asked many times over the course of these estimates. You mentioned previously that you had had a look at the emails in relation to communications to the stacia1 @ bigpond.com account. Can you advise whether you have looked at all the emails to the stacia1 or from the stacia1 @ bigpond.com account in coming to any conclusion about whether there is anything in them that ought to be investigated further or was it only in relation to the one between Minister Bailey and the Premier using that account?

**Mr MacSporran:** When the issue arose here with the Premier and the single email was produced, we reviewed the work we had done and the categories that were determined as per protocol and recovered all the emails in that category and assessed the content of them. As I say, nothing changed our view about the outcome from the original investigation that we conducted.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** To go to the heart of it, were there tens of emails from stacia1 or to stacia1 or were there half a dozen or were there hundreds? Perhaps you could enlighten us in that sense?

**Mr MacSporran:** It was not a large number. I cannot give you the exact number—I could on notice—but it was less than 20 from memory. Many of them were, from memory, on Saturdays or Sundays outside office hours. As I say, the content did not excite our interest otherwise.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But it is still fair to say that your recommendation remains and pertains that it is unsafe or unwise and a corruption risk to continue to use private email accounts for official business?

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Or government business?

**Mr MacSporran:** Yes. We said in one of the early press releases in July 2019, as we assessed the material, that we had uncovered that a number of other ministers were using private email accounts and that that was undesirable. We finished the assessment and made our conclusions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Stacia<sup>1</sup> was one of those ones you uncovered?

**Mr MacSporran:** We were not aware of that at that stage. We were aware of others. I think one minister at least—it might have been the former Attorney—outed herself as having used a private account. The practice had stopped after the Premier made that announcement.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Changed those rules.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Electoral Commissioner. In the relation to Electoral Management System, EMS, project, excluding the Konnech contract, how much have staffing costs, non-Konnech consultancy costs and any other costs associated with the delivery of this project come to?

**Mr Vidgen:** The Election Management System project has been ongoing for a number of years. The EMS budget in totality is over \$35 million. Originally it was less than that. It received some budget enhancement a few years ago in terms of further amendments which were required for the system in light of some law reform. The current budget allocation for the EMS is \$35 million. As you mention, the main provider is Konnech Australia and there is a contract with Konnech Australia in terms of the work it is doing. I think the question on notice asked whether we would provide the detail of that. Given it is a commercial-in-confidence arrangement we are in with Konnech, we declined to do that. However, I can provide other costings to the member.

**Ms SIMPSON:** They were asked for in the question on notice too—the staffing costs and other consultancy costs associated with delivering that. If you could break that down that would help. If you want to take that on notice and provide a commitment to bring it back, you can.

**Mr Vidgen:** The Election Management System is a complex IT system so while Konnech Australia are the main providers of the system, there are a range of other parties and inputs that went into the creation of the system.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Has there been a cost blowout in the delivery of the system?

**Mr Vidgen:** No, we are actually under budget.

**Ms SIMPSON:** With regard to consultancy in particular and non-Konnech consultants, I would appreciate getting that taken on notice for the end of the hearing. I refer you to the annual report of 2017-18—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, in relation to questions on notice, I understand that the only person who can take a question on notice is the minister.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Commissioner, did you want some time to provide those figures or are you happy to run through them now?

**Mr Vidgen:** I am happy to run through the figures. I have some figures in front of me which I can provide to the member.

**Ms SIMPSON:** The consultancy cost?

**Mr Vidgen:** I can. If you would like to run through what I have—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Yes, but I do not want to waste all the time just looking for some figures that should be easily to hand.

**Mr Vidgen:** I have six high-level line items which I can provide you some costings on at the moment including staffing and ICT contractors' consultancy costs.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Yes, please.

**Mr Vidgen:** In terms of staffing, \$2,198,000; consultancy costs, \$1,238,000; in terms of third-party project reviews, \$692,000; legal costs, \$418,000—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Over what period of time have these been?

**Mr Vidgen:** This is over the period of the project—so over a number of years.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I refer you to the annual report 2017-18 which says that the total implementation costs would be \$5 million, yet the response to a question on notice about the costs has indicated nearly \$30 million was allocated for the EMS contract plus the additional \$5.7 million for the additional functionality. Wouldn't you agree that that is quite a difference in original cost from being \$5 million in the annual report to now about \$30 million plus?

**Mr Vidgen:** No, I do not agree. I do not have the annual report before me, but it may have referred to the expenditure for that financial year. The election management system project was commenced in 2016, so there have been annual costs since 2016 to now. I think the reference to \$5 million would have been for that financial year. I do want to reiterate that the project is actually under budget.

**Ms SIMPSON:** There is a discrepancy between the annual report and this statement. Electoral Commissioner, we know that electoral rolls are publicly available, but a lot of internal administrative data such as when people vote, where they vote, early voting trends and names of polling booth staff are held by the Electoral Commission in the election management system. What guarantee can you give that no-one other than ECQ staff working for legitimate purposes can gain access to this critical data? How is it audited and were there any breaches of security protocol for accessing data during development?

**Mr Vidgen:** I am unaware of any breaches of data on the system in the development phase and also for the period for the local government election in March this year when the system was used and also in October. The system has been ongoing in development for a number of years—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Could I ask, Commissioner, could you please clarify—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is a supplementary question specific to—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, please allow the Electoral—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Chair, it is about—

**CHAIR:** Let me finish. Member for Maroochydore!

**Ms SIMPSON:**—if the commissioner is unaware, if he could please seek confirmation from his staff.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore!

**Mr Vidgen:** Perhaps to clarify my wording for the member, if there was a breach I would be aware, and I am unaware.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Unaware of even Australian based staff outside of the ECQ having access to real data during the testing and development phase?

**Mr Vidgen:** That is right. I should also point out to the committee that any member of the public can come to our offices at any time and access the roll.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Not the roll. I am talking about the other critical data that the EMS controls such as when people vote, where they vote—not how they vote and not the electoral roll. The EMS covers quite a range of critical data.

**Mr Vidgen:** It does.

**Ms SIMPSON:** You are saying that you are absolutely sure that there has been no breach by someone accessing that data during the development phase?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I advise you not to put words into the Electoral Commissioner's mouth.

**Mr Vidgen:** To clarify, the election management system is a significant system. It holds a lot of data, as the member indicated. We have nearly 3.4 million eligible voters in Queensland. For the local government election we had around 1,500 candidates. For the state government election we had nearly 600 candidates, 12 political parties and over 12,000 temporary election staff work for us. The election management system contains data regarding all of those things. It is a huge dataset.

The access to the data and to the system is controlled by the ECQ. Konnech Australia are our providers for the election management system. It is a very secure environment in which it exists. In fact, the reason the previous commissioner in 2016 decided to move to a new election management system was because of concerns with the current system at that time which was around 12 years old and the

security of that system. What the new system provides is a more secure system in terms of data management.

In terms of processes which we uphold to ensure security, the development of the system went through a range of gate proceedings where the system is tested by independent entities in terms of the development and the veracity of the system. We have also worked with the support of the Queensland Audit Office who have not overseen the system but at times we have been consulting with the QAO in terms of the system and how we have gone through the development phase. That has been a good relationship with the QAO. In fact, an early report from the QAO this year in terms of IT systems used the election management system as part of the case study in terms of that report.

We have worked with federal government jurisdictions in terms of the security of the system. We have worked with the ADF and a range of other federal agencies in regard to how we do our work. I will conclude by saying that I am very conscious of the need for public confidence in the election management system and the electoral system more broadly.

What I have undertaken since I have been in the role is to make sure that what we do is very transparent. This year, with the challenges we had in March through to October, my desire was to ensure that we had relevant expertise look at our system, look at our development and look at the data security of that system. At the end of the day, systems are only as good as the people who administer them, and part of that comes down to the training of our staff who use the system. It is a big system. There are always challenges in terms of how it is used. I am very confident that the systems we have in place and how the system was used for both March and October met the high standards I would expect.

**CHAIR:** I now call the member for Noosa.

**Ms BOLTON:** I am going to defer to the member for Maiwar.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, before we start using up crossbench time, I would like to get a ruling on a point of order. The refusal on the Attorney's part to answer questions previously was based on supposed preclusion in the program. The program does clearly list the Department of Justice and Attorney-General in this session and in the next. Can I have your confirmation that those questions are questions that can be answered?

**CHAIR:** First of all, what is your point of order?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am wanting a ruling about my capacity to ask the question I did previously given the schedule that was agreed and published by the committee?

**CHAIR:** My understanding is that the minister is entitled to answer the question in any—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am more than happy to answer your question. We have the heads of every statutory body here that reports to my agency. This session is designed to ask questions about statutory bodies in Queensland. If you would like to use your time now to ask that question because you do not have any questions about the Electoral Commission or the Human Rights Commission or any of those statutory bodies, I am happy, with the committee's indulgence, to answer that question now, if you would prefer, notwithstanding that we have two hours to do questions about legislative reform in the Department of Justice and Attorney-General following this session.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate that so very much, Attorney, but we have far more questions as crossbenchers to ask and have answered than there is time for today. I will make my decisions—

**CHAIR:** Get to your question.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is a matter for the committee then. The committee has, I understand, put forward a schedule where we are dealing with statutory bodies in this session. With the committee's leave, I am happy to answer any of your questions.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I think the chair has ruled that that is legitimate, so I might just proceed. Firstly, I refer to the 2017 QUT report on seller disclosure in Queensland and recommendation 5 of that report which proposed that a seller of a proposed lot under the BCCMA should be required to attach a copy of any building management statement that will be registered over lots in that scheme. My question to the director-general is did that recommendation make it into law and, if not, what is the government's stance in relation to it?

**Mr Mackie:** I would like to take that on notice and try to answer that before the end of the hearing. I believe it had been in the modules that are coming into regulation I thought in March, but I will double-check that.



**Mr BERKMAN:** Secondly, is the government considering going further to extinguish unfair and oppressive terms in building management statements to bring BMS under the protections offered by the Commissioner for Body Corporate and Community Management?

**Mr Mackie:** That is quite a detailed question. I would probably seek some time to get back to you on that as well. The QUT reports that have come out around body corporate and seller disclosure and property law are still going through quite significant consultation processes with peak bodies et cetera. It is going to be a staged release. I know it has been going on for a while, but it is a highly controversial issue when it comes to lot entitlement owners and owners of properties. I will come back to you on that specific question.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We made an election commitment to progress the Property Law Review, and I acknowledge that it is incredibly complex and has taken some time. We have also committed to establish the new strata legislation working group. It will be chaired by the commissioner for liquor and gaming regulation and will consist of stakeholder representatives. A lot of work has already been done in that space by the commissioner. It will consider all strata issues, including: whether the statutory duty of care owed to body corporates by building professionals should be legislated, dispute resolution and caretaker duties. We made an election commitment to progress the Property Law Act review. We are already moving to establish our working group, which will be chaired by the commissioner, and those regulations are coming into effect as well. We will get you more detail on that before the end of the session.

**Ms BOLTON:** With respect to question on notice No. 2 regarding the increase in funding for QCAT, I note that the answer refers to the 2019-20 budget. I do appreciate that it is extrapolated out over three years, but I would like to confirm that within this budget there has been no increase to that.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** You are right, Member: the increased budget to manage workload pressures at QCAT was over a number of years. That money is in this financial year and the years to come to deal with workload pressures. Like all of our courts, QCAT has done a tremendous job during COVID to manage a whole range of issues. Registry staff have had to be spread out over multiple floors and conduct hearings with members via videoconference and phone.

I have been down to the QCAT offices already in my short time in this role. I met with the president and members of the registry staff. They have done a phenomenal job. That \$13 million will continue to roll out to deal with workplace pressures. Because of the new 'lemon laws' jurisdiction, they are increasingly experiencing high demand in the guardianship and human rights part of the tribunal. We will continue to monitor workload pressures, but that \$13 million really has done a great job in helping to ameliorate some of those workload pressures over the next few years.

**CHAIR:** We will move to government members. Member for Cooper.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney-General, I refer to page 86 of the SDS, which relates to the Queensland Family and Child Commission. Can the Attorney-General advise how the QFCC is carrying out its engagement and education functions?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** One of the many roles of the Queensland Family and Child Commission is to use its cross-agency status to monitor and report on the performance of the child protection system and provide advice on contemporary child research and practice. They also provide local level family targeted education to help families and communities understand and fulfil their responsibilities to protect and care for children. The QFCC actively engages with young people throughout the state.

Between April and July 2020 the QFCC conducted the Growing Up in Queensland survey. They engaged with over 8,000 children and young people across Queensland through surveys, postcards and artwork to gain a better understanding of how children and young people felt about growing up in Queensland. Interim findings about their hopes and dreams—big issues in communities of young Queenslanders—have already been shared with key stakeholders to support effective service delivery informed by the perspectives of children and young people.

The QFCC delivers a number of community engagement and education programs to advocate the responsibility of families to protect and care for young children and also encourages families to seek support and use family support services. It also plays a role in educating the community about the child protection system. In 2019-20 the QFCC continued its key engagement. As well as talking to families they had education programs such as Out of the Dark and Families Are First, as well as working with the Youth Advisory Council. The wellbeing of parents also has a direct connection to the wellbeing and safety of children and young people, and the Talking Families School program continues to focus on

reducing stigma and instilling confidence in parents that, with the stresses of parenting, it is a normal thing to seek and accept support.

Through a network of over 110 schools and services, the QFCC's Talking Families School initiative supports adults along the journey of parenthood by encouraging positive parenting practices. The Families are First program has involved the collection and showcasing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' Yarn Up cards. They have been developed to be used as conversation starters for people to start talking about families. I encourage all members of the committee and all members of parliament to let organisations in your electorates know about these important programs.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, I refer to page 77 of the SDS and the importance of an independent and robust Crime and Corruption Commission. Can you please provide an update on how the government continues to support the CCC and their work to crack down on organised crime?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Crime and Corruption Commission is Queensland's chief crime and corruption-fighting body, and we respect the independence of the CCC and the important role it performs in relation to protecting Queenslanders from major crime and corruption. The Palaszczuk government provided the CCC with \$303,000 for the 2020-21 financial year to ensure the CCC has the necessary resources and capability to effectively support its crime intelligence operations and associated hearing programs.

As members would know, the CCC performs intelligence operations concerning organised crime, which is very important in disrupting major crime networks, peddling drugs and child pornography. As part of this government's successful organised crime laws, we created new offences each with a maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment that will target offenders who administer websites used to distribute child exploitation material, encourage the use of, promote or advertise websites used to distribute child exploitation material, and distribute information about how to avoid detection of, or prosecution for, an offence involving child exploitation material. We increased the maximum penalties for offences involving a child and making child exploitation material from 14 years to 20 years imprisonment. We also created a new circumstance of aggravation to apply to the existing and new offences related to child exploitation material in chapter 22.

**CHAIR:** With reference to page 103 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General provide an update on how the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman's education and engagement program assists government agencies and the wider community?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman has a well-established education and engagement program to help agencies improve their decision-making and complaints management systems and engage the wider community to improve awareness about complaint processes and ensure individuals have the information necessary to manage their complaints with relevant agencies. The Queensland Ombudsman plays a valuable role in providing services such as training, complaints management, system reviews, general advice and community engagement.

The training provided by the Ombudsman includes topics such as: decision-making; managing unreasonable complainant conduct; practical ethics for state and local government; and public interest disclosures. Although face-to-face training has been affected by COVID-19, the training program typically provides face-to-face training, including a significant number of visits to regional centres with 71 of a total 151 training sessions in 2019-20 conducted in regional Queensland. I am proud to say that in 2019-20, 92 per cent of training participants reported the training improved their decision-making capability, meeting the target of 90 per cent.

In 2019-20 the Ombudsman undertook a thematic review of 169 agencies' complaints management systems and responded to 41 requests from agencies to improve their decision-making and administrative policies, procedures and practices. The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman also engages in important community engagement which focuses on regional Queensland and key community organisations by providing support and services to disadvantaged Queenslanders such as culturally and linguistically diverse Queenslanders, refugees, Indigenous people, homeless people, children and young people, older Queenslanders, people with a disability and their carers, students and prisoners.

I would like to take opportunity to thank the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman for the hard work they do to assist agencies to improve their decision-making and complaints management systems and their engagement with the wider community to assist with complaint handling.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, do you have answers to any of those questions taken on notice?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I do, Chair. I think the first was from the member for Noosa. Member, you will be pleased to know I will be responding to your correspondence that was sent to the Premier in November this week. Thank you for your comments regarding political parties providing electors with approved postal vote application forms, including reply paid envelopes. The Electoral Commission also advises that they have received some complaints from electors about this practice, and we are considering those issues.

You also asked about money in the budget for compliance activities. I understand the commissioner is seeking that advice, so we will come back to you in the second session about the budget.

**Mr Mackie:** This may not directly answer the member for Maiwar's issue. I mentioned before the regulations around body corporates that are coming into effect in March 2021. They deal with facilitating the use of electronic technologies to attend and vote at body corporate meetings and to give and receive documents with bodies corporate; secondly, expanding the package of vital information and documents that developers are required to provide to bodies corporate at their first annual general meeting; and thirdly, encouraging early identification and remedy of building defects by requiring a body corporate to consider a motion to prepare a defect assessment report at its second annual meeting. I know that does not go down to the detail you were asking, Member.

Basically, what that means is your particular issue may be somewhat addressed by some of those regulations. If you require some further information, I can get that for you.


**Mr BERKMAN:** Any further information you can give on the specifics of building management statements would be much appreciated if that can come by the end of the session or on notice if at all possible.

**Mr Mackie:** Sure.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** There was also a question about Peter Carne and the education expenses. We are still getting that figure. I understand the DG will be happy to provide that at the end of the session.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 10.45 am and the committee will then continue the examination of the estimates for the justice and Attorney-General portfolio.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.30 am to 10.45 am.**

 **CHAIR:** The hearing is resumed. Welcome back, Attorney-General, and officials. The committee will now continue its examination of the proposed expenditure for the justice and Attorney-General portfolio.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Chair, before you start, I have the answer to the second part of the member for Noosa's question in the earlier session. The budget for the ECQ for compliance was \$637,217 this financial year.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Before I hand over to non-government members, I welcome back Mr Tim Nicholls, member for Clayfield. I also welcome to the estimates hearing Ros Bates, member for Mudgeeraba, and Amanda Camm, member for Whitsunday. I hand over to the deputy chair.

**Mrs GERBER:** I will defer my first question to the member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CAMM:** My question is to the Attorney-General. Other Australian jurisdictions, including the ACT and Western Australia, have amended their nonlethal strangulation offence to include legislative definitions of the words 'choke', 'suffocate' and 'strangle' to enhance certainty and ultimately increase the number of successful prosecutions. Have you met with key domestic violence advocates such as the Red Rose Foundation to discuss the issue of nonlethal strangulation? If so, do you commit to reviewing these laws?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Strangulation is an extremely serious crime that often occurs in the context of domestic and family violence. I am proud to have been the minister who introduced this as a standalone offence as part of the work we have done implementing all of the recommendations from *Not now, not ever*. Betty Taylor is well known to me and I often discuss these issues with her. She has been a tremendous advocate as part of the Red Rose Foundation and was one of the key advocates in getting strangulation introduced as a standalone offence.

Section 315A of the Criminal Code—'choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting'—commenced on 5 May 2016. It carries a maximum penalty of seven years, and most offenders

convicted receive sentences of imprisonment. The term 'choke, suffocate or strangle', as you have noted, is not currently defined in the Criminal Code. It is intended to have its ordinary meaning. On 17 April 2020 in the case *R v HBZ* [2020] it established that choking includes neck pressure that restricts breathing and that it was not necessary to prove the stopping of breath. The High Court recently refused a special leave application to appeal this decision. We are closely monitoring the operation of this offence and how this is interpreted. Ultimately, this is a matter for the court, but we are paying very close attention.

I recently as well announced a review into women's experiences in the criminal justice system. I have spoken to Women's Legal Service and many of the sexual assault services and domestic and family violence services, so this will be something we can examine in that review. The department is currently putting together a consultation plan and advisory group so we will make sure we keep monitoring this issue. As I said, it is currently before the courts.

**Ms CAMM:** As you have stated and I am aware, the Court of Appeal only clarified the word 'choke' but the other two words, 'suffocate' and 'strangle', still remain subject to dispute and therefore inconsistency. Do you support the broader definitions to be expanded for 'suffocate' and 'strangle' in line with the ACT's definitions?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I said, that is something we are working with stakeholders on as part of the review that I have announced.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you. My subsequent question is: what is your reason for not adopting legislative definitions to ensure all three definitions were clearly defined?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are monitoring how it is defined before the courts. This is a fairly new offence. It is something that the courts are defining through case law. It is appropriate that they do so, but we are monitoring that and we are working with the sector and we are happy to have those discussions as part of the broadscale review I have announced.

**Ms CAMM:** I have a subsequent question in relation to the strangulation institute. I note in the lead-up to the election and also reviewing of the budget papers that there was no funding allocated for the strangulation institute. Will there be funding allocated for the strangulation institute?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to meet with the Red Rose Foundation and Betty Taylor to discuss those issues.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, it has been 10 months since the horrific murder of Hannah Clarke and her children and tragically nine other women across our state. The consistent view across the sector is that victims have had multiple touchpoints with the government agencies and government funded services prior to their death. Are there statistics tracked for victims who have these touchpoints to prevent further tragedies and improve overall service delivery?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Part of the legislative reform that we embarked upon in response to *Not now, not ever* was around better information sharing between agencies when it comes to DV cases. There is a lot of work being done across agencies. There are now high-risk teams in place where domestic violence services work with police and are co-located to make sure that information is being shared, but of course there is always more to do.

The tragic case of Hannah Clarke and her children really has I think garnered everyone to look at what more we can do. That is why as a government we have an election commitment to legislate and criminalise coercive control. Hannah Clarke's friends and family, having now done some training in domestic and family violence and understanding power and control, wish they had known what they know now about the sorts of tactics that perpetrators use against victims—monitoring where they go, isolating women from family and friends, restricting money. These are the tactics that perpetrators use in coercive control. There is a big job to do, not only in criminalising that behaviour but also in educating frontline responders and the community about recognising the signs that perpetrators use when it comes to coercive control.

As tragic as that case is, I am very hopeful that we will see some meaningful change for women and children in Queensland. I am looking forward to the discussions with the sector to make sure we get that right. Coercive control is complex. We are looking forward to working with the sector to make sure that we get it right.

**Ms CAMM:** In addition—and given it has been 10 months—what domestic violence law reform did you enact this year?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** This year? I would have to check for the member, but certainly we have implemented all of the 140 recommendations in *Not now, not ever*. There were several pieces of legislation that I introduced and saw passed when I was the minister. In terms of any specific legislation passed in the last 12 months, I would have to get back to the member.

**Ms CAMM:** You will take that on notice?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Sure.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, I notice that there have been a number of reports today in the media—and the statement issued by yourself and the Deputy Premier—in relation to voluntary assisted dying laws. When did the Queensland Law Reform Commission seek additional time and additional funds to fully complete its report into voluntary assisted dying?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. One of the first meetings I had as the new Attorney-General was to meet with Justice Peter Applegarth, the chair, at the Law Reform Commission—I think it was a week into the job—and we discussed some of the time pressures that it was facing. Part of the issue is as a result of caretaker provisions the Queensland Law Reform Commission was not able to open its public submissions as early as it would have otherwise. Those submissions have only just closed, as the member would have seen, at the end of November. We discussed the timetable and we also discussed additional resources so that the Law Reform Commission could make sure that it got this complex issue right. A week after I was sworn in as the Attorney-General, I met with the chair, and that was raised with me.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Is it the case that the Law Reform Commission said that it could not open its consultation process for submissions because the government was in caretaker mode?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Apparently, the caretaker committees made a determination that consultation could not open during caretaker. That is what I have been advised by the Queensland Law Reform Commission. Consultation did not happen as early as it would have otherwise.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Had there been any consultation up till then by the Queensland Law Reform Commission?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes. It was referred the matter in May, so it had been doing a lot of work, but in terms of calling for public submissions I understand there was a delay in getting it up on the government website.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That delay was for a month, or during the period of the election?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes. It was the government's website that they could not open submissions on, which is how most people contribute to government submissions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But they could have written out to all of the stakeholders and those sorts of things without using the government website. It would not be unknown to the law society, the bar association or voluntary assisted dying. They could have gone out and sought those submissions?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That is right, but they did express some concern about the fact that they could not on the government's website open consultation. This is an issue that Queenslanders care deeply about. It is a complex issue. That was part of the some of the reasons behind needing additional time. It is also just a very complex issue, and it has requested more time and resources, and we have listened.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** How much extra resource is it being provided?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We still are in discussions, but certainly it has requested some specialist health policy advice and some legal policy advice from the health department and the justice department. Of course, as I said today, we are making arrangements for the chair, Justice Peter Applegarth, to be full-time on this referral. We are making arrangements also for an acting judge.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** If you cannot give the specifics, how much has it asked for to complete the job?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I cannot give the specifics, but it has asked for some health policy advice and some legal policy advice. We are in discussions with it about providing those resources as well as in discussions about an acting judge.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** For sure. Any round figure that you can say? Is it an acting judge for three, four, five months, that is, \$140,000 in salary, something like that? Is it legal experts on those matters, another \$150,000, half a million dollars?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is in the vicinity of half a million dollars.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Half a million dollars extra in order to complete the work? Right, okay. Is it fair to say that when the Premier made the announcement halfway through the election campaign, she made that announcement not knowing of these problems in terms of the consultation and the additional costs?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I cannot speak to what happened before I became the Attorney-General, but certainly when I was sworn in I met with the chair of the Law Reform Commission. We now have been in those discussions for some weeks, and I briefed the Premier late last week.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It would have been brave to make that announcement had those restrictions or difficulties been known?

**CHAIR:** Member for Clayfield, the question may not contain hypotheticals.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** What part of it is hypothetical, Mr Chairman?

**CHAIR:** Trying to anticipate what the Premier would have done.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I might just add that I think the Premier has shown great leadership in making this issue a priority for government. We have listened to the Law Reform Commission's request for further time and resources, and I think Queenslanders expect us to do that to get this right.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I understand that. The Premier had a time frame in place, then changed the time frame in the middle of an election and now has pushed the time frame back out again to the end of May as a result of representations made by other people—reported widely in the media. We have had three different positions on the timing of this legislation so far. What I am trying to get to the bottom of, though, is whether the department were aware of the restriction on it being able to open the consultation because of, we are told, the caretaker provisions?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can only tell you that I was told by the chair, Justice Peter Applegarth, when I met with him in my second week in the job.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Director-General, this is a significant matter to the government. You would be aware of these sorts of things. Were you aware of the restriction because of the caretaker provision? Do you sit on the caretaker advisory committee?

**Mr Mackie:** No, I do not sit on the caretaker advisory committee, but directors-general use that committee to make sure we are doing everything appropriate during the caretaker period. As the Attorney has said, the key issue around consultation around voluntary assisted dying was putting consultation up on the Get Involved website, which is the government's main way of doing that. Given the issue, that could have been seen as being political during caretaker, but that did not stop the QLRC continuing to do public consultation through letters, meetings or otherwise.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So it was really just the advertising on the government website that was restricted, whereas the QLRC continued advertising, calling for submissions, during that period?

**Mr Mackie:** They would have been doing their consultation process outside of the website, yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I go back to my question that you have not answered. Were you aware of this restriction on the advertising on the website prior to the current Attorney-General being appointed to that position?

**Mr Mackie:** At the time when the QLRC sought whether they could do it, I put that up to the caretaker advisory board and they came back that it would not be appropriate during the caretaker period. Yes, I did know.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And was that after the Premier made the announcement or before the Premier made the announcement?

**Mr Mackie:** It was during caretaker. I am not aware of the exact time. I could probably find that out, potentially.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That would be terrific. If you could let me know the date that you made that, that would be great.

**Mr Mackie:** If I may, I have the information in terms of the member's question about Peter Carne's costs for external educational expense. It was an executive masters of business administration at QUT. The cost was \$37,704.89.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is the extent of the courses that he went on?

**Mr Mackie:** I believe so, yes.

**Mrs GERBER:** I might change tack a little bit. My question is to the Attorney-General around liquor licensing. I refer to answer to question on notice No. 4. It reveals that between 1 July 2018 and December 2020 there were 1,551 licence transfer applications approved; however, alarmingly, the median time taken for these transfers was 41 days. Given Queensland's high unemployment rate and the need for businesses to be operating as quickly as possible, can you explain why it takes more than a month to transfer a liquor licence and whether the department has any KPIs around the approval process?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Certainly I know that the commissioner and the team are working proactively to assist businesses with their liquor licence applications. I also understand from the information provided in the answer to the question on notice that there were some particularly lengthy delays for some applications. Often in those cases that take a long time it is because we have requested more information from applicants. I think in that case we could not actually get in contact with that particular applicant, so that has blown out the time frame, if I remember correctly.

**Mrs GERBER:** You are saying that the median time frame has blown out because of individual applications taking longer?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I think there was some information provided in answer to the question on notice about time frames. Certainly they do everything they can. They recognise that these decisions are important to business. It is also really important that they have all the information they need in order to make these decisions.

**Mrs GERBER:** So is it taking a month to make these decisions? Is there a KPI within the department that says that is acceptable?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can get you that information around KPIs. We are getting you that information now.

**CHAIR:** Before we go on, I welcome Amy MacMahon, member for South Brisbane, to the committee.

**Ms CAMM:** My question to the Attorney is around the Red Rose Foundation and the strangulation institute. Did the government meet the Red Rose Foundation prior to the election?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am not sure. I was not the minister responsible for domestic and family violence at that time.

**Ms CAMM:** To your knowledge, was there a request for funding for the strangulation institute prior to the election?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Again, member, I am not sure. I was not the minister responsible.

**Ms CAMM:** Given that the risk of death is increased by almost 800 per cent once a woman has suffered strangulation, Attorney-General, do you believe that funding such an institute would be of value to the public?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I have said in answer to your previous two questions about this, it is an incredibly serious issue. I am very proud that we have introduced strangulation as a standalone offence. That was based on advocacy from the sector at the time. I am very happy to continue working with the sector to make sure we are doing everything we can so that the intent of our laws is actually implemented and reflected in court decisions.

**Ms CAMM:** Director-General, were you aware that there was a request for funding from the strangulation institute?

**Mr Mackie:** Thank you for the question. As you know, the prevention of domestic and family violence has only just transferred to my department, under Justice and Attorney-General, so I am not aware of that direct request. Having the responsibility now, I am certainly interested in meeting and engaging with all the groups to see what their concerns are with their own service delivery and how government may assist, if possible.

**Ms CAMM:** Would you take that question on notice as to whether there was a request for funding?

**Mr Mackie:** Yes, I can. To me personally I am not sure, though.

**Ms CAMM:** Through the minister.

**CHAIR:** It has to go through the minister.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I can advise you that the Red Rose Foundation received \$50,000 of Commonwealth COVID-19 funding, which came through the state government, for strangulation training for women's health and wellbeing services. The institute of strangulation is a health request. You would need to ask the Minister for Health about that request.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you. Minister, in relation to coercive control, can you advise the length of time set aside for community consultation?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are still working that through. As I said at the outset, the department is putting in place work now to develop a consultation strategy. We will be looking at a range of issues when we do this review, including hearing the experience of victims and key domestic and family violence and sexual violence stakeholders. Of course, the inquest into Hannah Clarke's death is due to make recommendations in the first half of next year, so we would want to consider those as well.

**Ms CAMM:** Although Hannah Clarke lost her life 10 months ago—I am sure tens of hundreds of women lost their lives prior to her—you do not have an end date to consultation or a goal in mind?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I said, member, this was an election commitment. I have said publicly that it is my top priority. We are working through these issues as part of a broader review into women in the criminal justice system. Coercive control being criminalised is an election commitment. We do want to get it right. There are only a handful of jurisdictions in the world that have criminalised coercive control. The findings, particularly from Scotland, which is held up to be, I think, world's best practice, are that training for frontline responders is key to making the system work. That is why I am also very proud that we have money set aside for training for first responders around coercive control. As I said, it is about being able to identify that pattern of behaviour. That requires a lot of training, not just for first responders but also for the community. We are doing that work now, and I will be very pleased to have more to say about this early in the new year.

**Ms CAMM:** In relation to training, Attorney-General, key stakeholders such as the Queensland Law Society are advocating for specialist training and in particular trauma informed training for judicial members, addressing the particular considerations in domestic and family violence matters. Will you commit to specialist training for the judiciary? In particular, will you commit to it for regions with a greater prevalence of domestic violence? Will they be prioritised?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am incredibly pleased that part of our response to domestic and family violence, and one of the key recommendations from *Not now, not ever*, was setting up specialist domestic and family violence courts. In those courts there is dedicated training for specialist magistrates around domestic and family violence matters. There is also training for court staff. Domestic and family violence services are embedded in the court system. We have our first domestic and family violence specialist court at Southport. We have rolled that out in Townsville, in regional Queensland. It does circuits to Palm Island and Mount Isa.

There is already a lot of training happening within the judiciary. I know that at magistrates conferences there has been a real focus on domestic and family violence training. We are going to continue to invest in that training for our judicial officers and our practitioners, and of course Legal Aid Queensland has the duty lawyer service for domestic and family violence and has embarked on a lot of training for its solicitors as well.

**Ms CAMM:** Is that training, in particular for magistrates, optional or mandatory?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to get the member some more detail on that, but certainly I know that at all magistrates conferences, which all magistrates attend, there has been specific domestic and family violence training.

**Ms CAMM:** My question is more pertinent in relation to DV court and specialised DV court. Does the judiciary, as part of that DV court service, have to undertake mandatory training to be part of that?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Absolutely the specialist magistrates undertake training. In 2016-17 there was also \$672,000 over four years and ongoing for professional development for magistrates. There is a new benchbook for magistrates which deals with domestic and family violence. They have an annual domestic and family violence conference for magistrates and content in regular magistrates conferences, so there is a lot being done. I think our magistrates work incredibly hard right across the state dealing with an increased number of domestic and family violence incidents and I want to congratulate the Chief Magistrate for taking this issue so seriously and for embracing the rollout of the specialist domestic and family violence courts.

**Ms CAMM:** Thank you.



**Mr NICHOLLS:** I think Mr Mackie wants to give us an answer.

**Mr Mackie:** Yes, Chair, if it is okay.

**CHAIR:** Yes, of course.

**Mr Mackie:** I am responding to the member for Clayfield. This was in relation to when I was notified that the QLRC could not put consultation on the Get Involved website for the government. I was informed of that on 23 October. However, the QLRC already had it on their own website on 16 October.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks, Mr Mackie.

**Ms BATES:** My question is to the Attorney-General. There has been no specific funding for the strangulation institute under this government other than private funding. Will the minister fund the strangulation institute?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question and my answer is the same as my answer to the question put by the member for Whitsunday. I am happy to work with the sector to look at what funding the institute might need and the work that they are doing as part of our broader review into women in the criminal justice system.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you. Given the Attorney-General spoke only this morning about record funding to community legal centres, will the Attorney-General commit to funding My Community Legal centre in Robina, which is the only community legal centre not funded in the state?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. There is a procurement process that government follows when it comes to providing funds to community legal centres. I understand that the Robina community legal centre was unsuccessful in applying for funding and the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre, which covers that area, has been given funding to provide community legal services for the Gold Coast. I understand the department has twice provided feedback to the Robina community legal centre.

**Ms BATES:** Minister, they have been waiting seven years to get funding and, as you would be aware, 75 per cent of the people that they represent are domestic and family violence related. I cannot understand the system as to why they are the only community legal centre in the state not funded and the only community legal centre that can represent people in the southern Gold Coast.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, member. As I said, at the moment our state funding includes an additional \$5.6 million for CLCs. There was an open and robust tender process that allocated available Commonwealth and state funding to CLCs. The Robina legal centre, which is now called My Community Legal centre, was unsuccessful in this process. Understandably, they were disappointed. They have been provided with feedback—written and face to face—from the previous funding round and they were provided with written and face-to-face feedback from the most recent process. As I have stated, the Gold Coast Community Legal Centre & Advice Bureau was funded and provides services to vulnerable Queenslanders at the Gold Coast. I am also informed that there are many community legal centres that were not successful in getting this funding. Robina legal service is not the only one.

**Ms BATES:** My understanding is that it is not, but thank you anyway, Minister. Given the government's quota to have 50 per cent women on boards, can the minister inform the committee if the seats of Toohey and Ferny Grove will hold by-elections in the next six months to maintain Labor's 50 per cent quota for women members?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** And, member, which part of the SDS would you like this question related to in terms of the budget we are examining today?

**Ms BATES:** It is more about the question, Minister. Thank you.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to wait for your advice.

**Ms BATES:** It is about the question.

**Mrs GERBER:** Chair, my understanding is that questions do not need to relate to the SDS. Questions have to relate to—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The budget. They have to relate to the budget.

**CHAIR:** Yes, they have to relate to the budget.

**Mrs GERBER:** The budget, yes, but she does not need to point to a section of the SDS.

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Well, a by-election is going to cost money.

**Mrs GERBER:** A by-election is going to cost—and I should know—a significant amount of money to taxpayers.

**Ms BATES:** Yes, and back comes Jackie Trad.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** But perhaps that was a question better directed to the commissioner, who was here earlier.

**Ms BATES:** Thank you, Minister.

**CHAIR:** This will be the last question from that side.

**Ms CAMM:** Minister, can you advise when a decision will be made and implemented as to the findings of the ANROWS electronic monitoring in the context of domestic and family violence report? If this is under consideration, what will the deadline be for a decision to be made? This is in relation to monitoring of perpetrators.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** GPS, yes; I thank the member for the question. As you would know, ANROWS completed a significant review into how we could use these devices to keep victims of domestic and family violence safe. I understand that as part of the review they did say that if used in isolation it could be quite unsafe for victims and it needed to be part of broader case management, so we are continuing to monitor this situation.

One of the key findings, as I said, is that it needs to not be a standalone measure but needs to incorporate interventions that respond to the risk and need of individuals. Again, we are happy to keep working with the sector on making sure that when we do introduce this technology it does keep women safe. We do have legislative changes that have enabled GPS monitoring to be used in the bail and parole context, including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence when considered appropriate.

**Ms CAMM:** Is it a priority though, Minister?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes. We are continuing to monitor as the technology changes and how it is being rolled out currently in relation to bail and parole.

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

**Ms BOLTON:** Attorney, I will go back to my earlier question regarding the unprecedented demand for housing and emergency accommodations on the Sunshine Coast and Noosa for those families not only experiencing domestic and family violence but also that are not eligible for any form of public housing.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Making sure that victims of domestic and family violence and sexual violence have a safe place to go is critical as we respond to this violence and we are committed to making sure that everyone fleeing domestic and family violence is able to access safe emergency housing. Having nowhere to go should not be a reason to stay in a dangerous situation. We are continuing to increase support for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. As I said in my opening, we have built seven new shelters in Queensland in the last five years—the first new shelters in over 20 years. We are continuing to invest in mobile support services to support women placed in motels or other temporary accommodation. There are some women—they may have older children—who simply do not wish to be placed in refuges. We have to make sure that we are providing solutions that suit all women and children.

I can advise that the department of housing will find anyone escaping domestic and family violence a place to stay that same day if they call the Homeless Hotline or DVConnect. We have also through \$7.5 million of COVID-19 domestic and family violence funding announced by Minister Farmer in the middle of this year allocated an additional \$1.7 million for crisis accommodation, including to support women transitioning to alternative accommodation. Through the Commonwealth's DFV funding package, we have also allocated \$4.6 million to support crisis and post crisis accommodation. In the state budget we have \$139 million to provide housing and support to vulnerable people, particularly those experiencing domestic and family violence, through specialist homelessness services.

**Ms BOLTON:** As a supplementary to that, in areas that are particularly a hot spot like the Noosa area—where there is no accommodation, there is no housing and we do not even have motels or resorts—there is an issue where children are having to go to school but they are suddenly being moved a distance away that is not realistic. What types of initiatives are within the budget to work with the department of housing to get this resolved?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know that the Office of Women works very closely with the Department of Housing. If there are no available motels and hotels, I know DVConnect will do absolutely everything they can to find someone affordable housing. We work with Housing. They will find somewhere safe to

stay that night while we put in place supports around victims and their children. If there are particular issues in Noosa with a lack of accommodation I am very happy to get the Office of Women to work with the member and some of the services up there to make sure that women do not have to stay in any dangerous situations.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. My next question is to the Attorney. What provision in the budget is there for families experiencing domestic and family violence from their children or young adults? This is a prevalent issue in my community and it is a very difficult one.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is. Thank you very much. Certainly I know that we are investing record amounts in perpetrator programs, including a new trial which works with young men and their mothers so that we can intervene earlier to break the cycle of violence. We know that the behaviours and attitudes that underpin the violence often start with a lack of respect towards women so this trial, which is in partnership with the domestic violence service at Ipswich and Griffith University, is looking at young male perpetrators and their relationship with their mother. I was fortunate enough to sit in on one of the early sessions in this trial. It is groundbreaking work. There is an evaluation on currently. I think the more we can work with young men on their attitudes towards women, particularly women in their family, we are going to start to see attitudinal change. I would be happy to arrange a briefing for the member.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. I will defer the next question to the member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is to the Attorney. What is the status of the minimum age of criminal responsibility review being led by the Council of Attorneys-General working group, including any publications or due date for completion?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Certainly it is a matter for the Council of Attorneys-General. I understand it is not one of their key priorities in the next 12 months.

**Mr Mackie:** If I may, sorry to interject, I am trying to get as much information back to the committee as I can before the end. I notice the member for Maiwar is not here, but he did ask a question about the disclosure of building management statements as part of body corporate. I can confirm that that matter is not involved in the regulations that are coming through in March 2021, which I said before. However, there is a community titles legislative working group being chaired by the commissioner of the Office of Fair Trading in my department. I am more than happy if the member would like to make a submission to the commissioner and that can be incorporated in those discussions with the key stakeholders.

**Ms BOLTON:** Can I just ask one more question to the Attorney. Further to the member for Whitsunday's questions regarding strangulation, will the use or threat of accelerant be included in that review and part of the criminalisation as an offence?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, member. I know that this is something that a few services have raised with the Office of Women in the prevention of domestic and family violence. As a matter of urgency of course I have said we will start consultation on coercive control and then broadly look at women's experience in the criminal justice system as well. We will absolutely look at that matter.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, I refer to page 61 of the SDS. Can the Attorney-General provide an update in relation to the implementation of the government's no card, no start framework and how it provides added protection to Queensland's children?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The Queensland Family and Child Commission found that Queensland's blue card system was one of the strongest working with children checks in Australia. However, there is always room for improvement. To further strengthen the blue card system, the Palaszczuk government implemented no card, no start laws which commenced on 31 August this year. This delivered on a Palaszczuk government election commitment to make Queensland a safer place for children. No card, no start means that all persons working in child related work must be issued with a blue card prior to commencing work. Queenslanders seeking paid employment can now also apply for a blue card before they have an agreement to work with an employer. This means that Queenslanders can come to employers job ready with a blue card and be ready to commence paid work as soon as possible.

The new laws were accompanied by IT enhancement, modernising the process and reducing processing time frames. That was no mean feat, I understand. It was a radical change to procedures at blue card and they have done a tremendous job. We now have an online ability for people to apply or renew their blue cards. There is a stronger identity-checking process and the introduction of photos on cards and an updated online portal for employers to manage their blue card records.

Members of the committee will be interested to know that between 31 August and 30 September this year 72 per cent of applications received were made online. The average processing time frame for online applications made for people with no police or disciplinary information was 1.94 business days and this is well within the five business day processing benchmark recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. In comparison, over the same time period in 2019 where there was no online capacity, the average processing time frame for applications made for people with no police or disciplinary information was 11.62 business days. I want to congratulate the director-general and the team at blue card. They have done tremendous work.

The commencement of no card, no start builds upon our government's strong record in relation to blue cards having added an additional 15 offences to the list of offences disqualifying people from working with children.

**Ms BUSH:** I note that page 67 of the SDS states that the women and violence prevention service area will continue to support domestic and family violence victims and manage the increasing demand for services. Can the Attorney-General identify how the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is supporting victims through Victim Assist Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question and I acknowledge the member for Cooper who, before she entered parliament, worked in Victim Assist Queensland helping those most vulnerable in our community recover from violent crimes. I acknowledge her and the entire Victim Assist Queensland team who have worked tirelessly through COVID-19 to make sure that victims have access to vital assistance and support.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to supporting victims of violent crime in Queensland, and it is why we continue to support the Victim Assist Queensland program which provides referral, support and financial assistance to people affected by violent crime, including domestic and family violence. The assistance gives victims a helping hand to pay for things. It will help them recover from violent crimes such as counselling, medical and dental expenses or the loss of earnings. In 2017 we changed the Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009 to make it easier for victims to access the scheme, particularly for domestic and family violence victims. In line with making the program more accessible in the 2019-20 budget, the Palaszczuk government committed an additional \$2 million in funding over two years for Victim Assist Queensland to meet the increasing demand.

In addition to this, Victim Assist Queensland received additional funding of \$0.74 million from the Commonwealth COVID-19 domestic and family violence funding package. That was the second tranche which we got out the door to frontline services to engage additional staff to focus on domestic and family violence applications. For victims this means applications will be processed quicker and access to assistance will be provided earlier, helping victims recover sooner.

Last year Victim Assist Queensland provided more than \$13 million in financial assistance to over 2,600 victims and family members affected by violent crime in Queensland. The department, through Victim Assist Queensland, also supports victims by funding six non-government organisations with more than \$15 million over five years to support victims of violent crime. That includes \$1.35 million to Relationships Australia Queensland for a 24-hour telephone information and referral service for victims; \$530,000 to Protect All Children Today to support child victims and witnesses in court; \$220,000 to Anglicare Southern Queensland for the Living Well program, which offers counselling and support to male victims of sexual assault; \$240,000 to Court Network for their victim focused court support services in Brisbane city and Ipswich courts; \$270,000 to the WWILD Sexual Violence Prevention Association to counsel victims with an intellectual disability in Caboolture, Brisbane and Logan, as well as training for agencies working with these victims right across the state; and \$530,000 to Queensland Homicide Victims' Support Group Family Support After Murder Incorporated to provide support for family and friends in the aftermath of homicide, including court support and 24-hour telephone support.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 58 of the SDS and the department's priority to end domestic and family violence, could the Attorney-General please outline what the government is doing to look at coercive control and what more we can do to protect victims and their families?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Ending violence against women is all of our responsibility. Since 2015 the Palaszczuk government has provided over half a billion dollars to support the sector, and as I have said a couple of times already including for new refuges for women. We have delivered on all 140 recommendations from *Not now, not ever* but we know there is always more to be done as women continue to die at the hands of the men who are meant to love them.

I have already talked about our commitment to legislate against coercive control as a form of domestic and family violence. Coercive control is a strategic form of ongoing oppression used to instil

fear. It is about using tactics like isolating a woman from her friends and family, tracking her movements through invasive surveillance and restricting where she goes and who she sees. We also know that it is one of the biggest predicting factors of intimate partner homicide. Legislating against coercive control is aimed at gearing the system towards intervening earlier and hopefully saving lives.

Before we legislate against coercive control, we will be undergoing extensive consultation with the sector. It is crucial that we get this right. As I have mentioned, very few countries across the world have legislated against coercive control. Early results indicate that success is dependent on widespread and sustained training to support implementation, which is why we have that commitment to invest in training for police and first responders, as well as a public education and awareness campaign.

Earlier this year we saw the horrific murder of Hannah Clarke and her children. Hannah's friends and family went to the police but they did not know how to describe what was happening; they just knew he was going to kill her. Knowing what they know now about domestic violence perpetrators' use of violence and control, they could have called out this behaviour as coercive control and pointed to specific behaviours.

We all need to learn about coercive control and how it impacts victims. We need to empower women and those around them to identify and report on those behaviours. Domestic violence has no place in Queensland and we will continue to work to eliminate it from our community.

**CHAIR:** Attorney, with reference to page 59 of the SDS, can you outline how Queensland courts and tribunals adapted to the effects of COVID-19?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Queensland is currently in a strong position thanks to the early actions taken to address the health and economic impacts of the pandemic. Importantly, the Palaszczuk government has made significant investments in Queensland's courts and tribunals that have meant Queensland is placed strongly to adapt to the effects of COVID-19. Backlog and clearance rates have been heavily affected by COVID-19 nationwide. Despite this the Queensland courts have been doing their best to reduce backlogs across a range of jurisdictions between June and November this year.

A number of strategies were implemented to try to ameliorate backlogs caused by COVID-19, including the Chief Justice convening regular meetings with the heads of jurisdiction and the legal profession, and separately with the department of Youth Justice, Queensland police, my department and Corrective Services. These meetings provided an opportunity to identify risks and issues and address barriers to service delivery in the COVID-19 environment.

Practice directions were issued by heads of jurisdiction in response to COVID restrictions. For example, where possible matters were dealt with by judge-alone trials. In the supreme and district courts, between 16 March and 22 June 37 judge-alone trials were conducted compared to one for the same period in the previous year. Staff were reassigned from the department to assist QCAT and the magistrates courts to deal with additional workloads in relation to adjourning and dealing with matters in accordance with new practice directions. Appearances by telephone and video conference were used wherever possible and practical. Registries worked to develop COVID-safe plans for their particular locations. Statewide COVID management principles were developed for magistrates courts, in consultation with Queensland Health. Process changes were introduced in the magistrates courts to support new ways of working and relieve registry workloads.

Technology solutions to improve the end user's experience of courts and their ability to access some services online were developed and implemented. Courts have continued to innovate using technology, as demonstrated by the Supreme Court pilot for certain legal practitioners to submit probate applications online; the Magistrates Court launch of an online application for court events for legal practitioners and the prosecution; and the development of further electronic filing initiatives, including submission of documents and case lookup.

The Queensland courts were able to remain open and hearing matters with changes to operations in line with COVID-safe practices and practice directions as issued by the heads of jurisdiction. As most urgent matters such as arrests, bail hearings, domestic and family violence and children protection matters were prioritised, specialist courts and referral services generally continued during the height of Queensland's response to COVID-19 under COVID-safe plans, with the exception of the Murri Court, the Townsville High Risk Youth Court, Court Link and Queensland drug and alcohol program operations, which were temporarily suspended during the height of the response to COVID. All specialist court and referral services have now resumed, with in-person hearings and appearances operating in line with COVID-safe practices. I am incredibly proud of and take the opportunity to thank all workers at Queensland courts and tribunals for their tireless work during COVID-19 and for the way

that they have innovated and continue to provide critical services in an extremely challenging environment.

**Ms BUSH:** With reference to page 67 of the SDS, could the Attorney-General please outline what work the department is doing to break the cycle of violence and hold perpetrators accountable, and what role the community has in ending violence against women?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I know the member is passionate about working with the community to tackle the negative attitudes and behaviours that feed the cycle of domestic and family violence. As the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, I hear a lot of heartbreaking stories every day. They are usually from the perspective of those whose lives have been significantly impacted by violence. We know that domestic and family violence affects everyone, every postcode, every profession and every cultural background, and each and every one of us has a responsibility to do something about it.

I speak a lot about the kind of cultural change we need to instil in our future generations to develop healthy, respectful relationships free from violence and abuse. That is why the Palaszczuk government has committed to investing in prevention programs that promote generational change so that we can shift our culture away from violence. We now have initiatives such as our ReNew program, which seeks to reduce domestic and family violence perpetrated by young men against their mothers and siblings. That critical program is a chance to improve the connection between mothers and sons while also reducing the risk of young people perpetrating violence as adults.

That is why in this year's budget we have provided an additional \$8.7 million to 26 service providers to support men who want to take responsibility for their behaviour and are seeking to change. That is on top of the \$30 million invested between 2016 and 2020 for perpetrator intervention services. We have also committed \$5.7 million for DVConnect in 2020-21 to provide telephone helplines to support people using or experiencing domestic and family violence, including a dedicated men's line. We know that whatever we can do to send a message to boys and young men about respecting their mothers, their sisters and the women in their lives really will help end the cycle of violence. We should do everything we can to make sure that we are intervening earlier in that cycle of violence.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, I refer to page 59 of the SDS. Can you outline to the committee the importance of timely and accurate recording and transcription services for our courts and tribunals?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Delays in the provision of a transcript and also the provision of inaccurate transcripts can lead to unnecessary delays in court proceedings such as jury trials and impact on the ability of our judicial officers to deliver judgements. This is something that the Palaszczuk government is still fixing after the LNP's cuts to the department when they were last in government, including outsourcing recording and transcription services exclusively to Auscript. The state reporting bureau was abolished, 507 full-time workers lost their jobs and it had a real impact right across regional Queensland.

The Auditor-General has conducted a review of the process that led to the outsourcing and produced a scathing assessment of the process that was used by then the attorney-general, the member for Kawana. The Palaszczuk government is now fixing that mess. The Palaszczuk government is investing additional funding of \$46.3 million over six years from 2020-21, bringing the total commitment to \$109 million from March 2019 to June 2026, to transition to a new service delivery model that supports project activities and ongoing services. COVID-19, of course, impacted key project deliverables, as well as the successful transcription provider's readiness to commence the new service. Approval has been granted to make sure that the new service is ready to start from 1 March to now 1 July, which mitigates any risks associated with the full implementation of the new service.

I am pleased to advise all hardware and recording software required for the new delivery model has been procured and delivered. Installation of the hardware in the state's 249 court sites is expected to be completed this month. A service operations platform to manage internal workflows of the new service and provide a portal for ordering transcripts has been built and tested, and the Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of fixing this mess.

**CHAIR:** With reference to pages 65 and 66 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General advise what the Palaszczuk government has done to assist craft brewers and artisan distillers through the effects of COVID-19?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Queensland is home to a growing number of craft brewers and distillers. Before the pandemic disrupted the industry, Queensland craft brewers and artisan distillers contributed significantly to the Queensland economy and employed over 1,800 people. We know that the industry has struggled during COVID and, like many hospitality businesses, they were forced to temporarily

close their doors and reduce their venue capacity. However, the Palaszczuk government's strong actions have helped save Queensland artisan liquor producers and Queensland jobs.

Importantly, legislative changes provided temporary powers to the Commissioner for Liquor and Gaming to issue takeaway liquor authorities which allowed Queensland's liquor licensees, including craft brewers, artisan distillers and other liquor licensees to sell takeaway alcohol while affected by public health directions. As the previous minister for small business, I know how important and how welcomed this relaxation was for the small business community. The takeaway liquor authorities allowed many craft brewers and artisan distillers to trade and keep Queenslanders employed. I met with one Gold Coast distiller who was able to actually create a job during COVID in warehousing due to the boom caused by takeaway sales.

To support growth in the boutique liquor sector as COVID restrictions continue to ease, the artisan liquor bill has been re-introduced by the Palaszczuk government which provides for a new artisan producer licence to be made available to craft brewers and artisan distillers. Implementing policy like this is key to our state's economic recovery, supporting more jobs in more industries.

The artisan producer licence authorisations increase market access opportunities and removes the need for some licensees to obtain two separate liquor licences. The changes to this licence such as allowing craft brewers and distillers to continue to sell their products online will be crucial in supporting them to expand as more businesses move online. Allowing them to sell more through retail channels improves business viability and allows them to create experience venues while they lack distribution channels. Licence holders will also be able to attend promotional events such as farmers' markets to sell samples and limited takeaways of their own liquor and apply for a permit to sell their open liquor at commercial public events like music festivals. Streamlining regulation and unlocking the potential of emerging industries is key to our state's economic recovery.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney-General, the last annual report for the Coroners Court showed that the coronial system is operating under some stress with increased delays and backlogs. I do note the number of deaths reported for investigation by the coroner has increased by 27 per cent. The number of coroners remains the same. It looks like this year's budget shows that 14 per cent of cases in the Coroners Court are 24 months old or greater, almost three times higher than the targeted backlog. Do you have plans to increase the number of coroners to address this backlog? What other steps are being taken to try to reduce the backlog, noting that not everything is within the control of the court?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Certainly demand for coronial service is increasing due to a range of factors, including population growth, increasing case complexity and growing community expectations. The Queensland Audit Office 2018 performance audit made some recommendations to my department as well as the Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet aimed at improving service delivery for families. There were four key areas that they looked at: enhancing triaging practices, strengthening case management and legal support, enhancing management of government undertaker contracts, and improving administration of the burials assistance scheme and driving system innovation. That work is ongoing.

In terms of enhancing triaging practices, by establishing a second multidisciplinary coronial register team to effectively triage apparent natural cause deaths reported to the Queensland Police Service is one of the big pieces of work that they are undertaking. It is a key step in reducing demand as one of the largest categories of deaths reported to the Coroners Court. It improves outcomes for families by seeking to increase the issuing of cause of death certificates where appropriate. It reduces pressures on coroners and forensic pathologists to help them focus on the more complex cases, and the preliminary trial data shows reduced apparent natural cause deaths reported to the QPS and fewer cases reported to the court. It also shows reduced deaths requiring coroner investigation or autopsy. So that is having a big difference and that work is ongoing. In the 2020-21 budget, we have interim funding of nearly \$0.6 million and eight FTEs for the Coroners Court to continue the implementation of the audit recommendation. There have been a number of recommendations made about how we can enhance efficiency at the court. That work is ongoing and there is money in the budget to continue that work.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** But it is fair to say that there are no more coroners being put on?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** At this stage, there is money for more coronial registry staff to assist with working through those recommendations, but there is no budget this financial year for an additional coroner.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Can I similarly ask in relation to another matter—and you touched on it previously—and that is in relation to the property law review, that much loved statute of first-year law students, the Property Law Act. The review was commissioned probably five years ago now, perhaps

a little longer. A report was delivered by the QUT centre—I think Sharon Christensen, Bill Duncan and others. They were paid something like \$350,000 in order to prepare it. It is very comprehensive and they made suggestions in relation to the changes that could be made to modernise it, remove clauses and all those sorts of things. It has been with the government now since 2017 when that report was delivered. Is there a deadline for bringing in legislation to modernise the Property Law Act, given that lengthy time and that expenditure, and when would Queenslanders expect to receive the benefit of a modernised Property Law Act?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I acknowledge that this review has been with government for some time. It is incredibly complex and we have been out to public consultation with some of the recommendations from the QUT report. I have to say not everyone agrees with the recommendations delivered by the QUT report. You will be surprised to know there are often many different views about how we tackle property law reform. What I can say to you is that there are a number of election commitments around law reform; the Property Law Act is one of them. We have an agenda around keeping women and their children safe. There is a Trusts Acts review—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I think it was at the last election, too.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I acknowledge that. The department and I are working through some of these outstanding reports. I want to say that this is a priority for the government. We have an election commitment to introduce legislation this term. Once we have done that work around priorities for the next few years in terms of legislation, I will be happy to get back to the member.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That does not sound like any time in the next 12 months. You say ‘priorities for this term’—that is to 2024. It has not been established. It has been sitting there since 2017 and it was an election—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** To be fair—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I can agree it is complex, don't get me wrong.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** To be fair, we have established the strata title working group, which the department is now doing. It is on the agenda. It is an election commitment to do it this term. As you can appreciate, I am four weeks into this role with a number of legislative agendas and election commitments. I will be making some decisions in the coming months with the department about priorities for legislative reform and I am happy to make those announcements when we have had those discussions.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That is good to know: you are going to let us know when you have made your decision.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes, I will.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Good. That is always handy.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** My pleasure.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I point out that the body corporate and community management amendments have been going for five years as well. It is a case of making hay slowly, certainly, on that particular issue. I will pass onto the member for Whitsunday.

**Ms CAMM:** Are there any outstanding recommendations the government has yet to finalise from the domestic and family violence death review unit?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The domestic and family violence death review unit is one of the key recommendations that this government delivered on out of the *Not now, not ever* report. It was established in July 2016. They have made a number of recommendations in their two annual reports. There is a deadline for their latest annual report of the end of year. In terms of recommendations, all of them have been accepted or accepted in principle. They release progress reports on their website every six months. They detail where implementation is up to.

**Ms CAMM:** I have a question in relation to recommendation 10 that was accepted in principle, in particular around funding for a training package to be developed to focus on how to respond to perpetrators, maintain the safety of victims and their children that would align with the national outcome and standards for perpetrator intervention programs. Has that been funded in this year's budget?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are rolling out perpetrator intervention services right across Queensland. There has been a 144 per cent increase in the number of services being rolled out. The department is currently reviewing standards in relation to the qualifications and experience of facilitation staff and



supervisors. That work is ongoing. To see an increase of 144 per cent in perpetrator intervention services over the last few years is huge.

**Ms CAMM:** That is from a very low base, though, Minister—144 per cent.

**CHAIR:** Member for Whitsunday, can you please let the minister finish her answer. Do not interrupt.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Member for Whitsunday, you were not part of the parliament when the LNP was last in government, but they actually cut funding to a range of domestic and family violence providers—

**Ms BATES:** Not true.

**Ms FENTIMAN:**—that funded perpetrator programs—

**Mr POWELL:** That is rubbish.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I have the list here, member for Glass House, if you would like me to table it.

**Ms BATES:** That is why 11 women out of 22 in Australia have died here in Queensland. You have done such a fantastic job.

**CHAIR:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I might also add that they also gagged domestic violence services from speaking out when their funding was cut.

**Ms BATES:** This is the minister who made sure that nothing happened for domestic violence for three years previously.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mudgeeraba, this is not the time for you to make—

**Ms BATES:** You have had three years as the minister before—

**CHAIR:** Order! Member for Mudgeeraba.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** It is okay, Chair. The member for Mudgeeraba was a member of the cabinet that approved the cuts to many domestic and family violence services. She was not in the cabinet for long, but she was there for those decisions.

**Ms BATES:** *Not now, not ever* was the LNP. You failed to roll it out properly and women have died and continue to die.

**CHAIR:** Member for Mudgeeraba, you are being disorderly. I remind you that you are here at the discretion of the committee and that can be taken away at any time.

**Ms CAMM:** If I can just clarify with the minister, the reference to the 144 per cent and the men's perpetrator program is not actually what I was asking for. What I was asking—

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I did answer your question about the training and I said that the department is currently reviewing that.

**Ms CAMM:** My question was very specific: was there an allocation this financial year to establish and develop the training package?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** The office for the prevention of domestic and family violence is funded and they are reviewing that work.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** In relation to the administration of justice, it has been reported to me that there are allegations in relation to a District Court judge regarding the behaviour of that judge and in particular the behaviour of that judge regarding an employee of the court and that that matter has been determined or is being dealt with by Chief Judge of the District Court. Is the Attorney aware of that matter and are there any circumstances in which it would be acceptable or unacceptable for such bullying to occur?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am not aware of that matter. I have met with chief judge since my appointment as Attorney-General. It was not a matter that was raised with me. I certainly think that bullying and harassment in the workplace are unacceptable.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Given your recent appointment, it might be more appropriate if Mr Mackie, as the director-general, were able to respond to that matter. Is a matter involving bullying carried out by a district court judge something you are aware of? Were, for example, legal advisers appointed to the parties involved?

**Mr Mackie:** The chief judge, Judge Devereaux, had raised in very general terms that there were some accusations made or complaints made about a judge, but he advised me that he had it well in

hand with the two parties to make sure that both parties were satisfied with whatever outcome was discussed with them.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Have you satisfied yourself in subsequent discussion with the chief judge that that is the case?

**Mr Mackie:** No, I have not got back to the chief judge on it yet. I am sure the chief judge would contact me if there were ongoing issues there.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Indeed. In terms of the costs, because it is a budgetary matter, would the expenses for legal counsel appointed to the parties involved come out of the District Court's budget?

**Mr Mackie:** I am unaware of legal parties being appointed in relation to this matter, but it would come out of the court's budget, I would imagine.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** It would be up to them to resolve that matter as a workplace harassment or bullying issue if that were the case. I stress that these are allegations.

**Mr Mackie:** It is a matter before the court itself so he would be responsible as chief judge. The chief judge could ask for the department's assistance through me, but he has not done that at this point.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** My next question relates to issues regarding a North Queensland magistrate. I direct this question again, Attorney, given the fact that you are only recently in the position, to the director-general. Has any investigation been undertaken into the conduct of a North Queensland based magistrate who failed to recuse themselves from sitting on a domestic violence case despite having an involvement with one of the parties in the case before that magistrate?

**Mr Mackie:** I could not answer your question. I am not aware of that in detail in any way.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Are you aware of it in the broad?

**Mr Mackie:** I am aware. It might have been the Chief Magistrate who raised it with me at one point very broadly, but I have no information about where that has progressed to.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Are you aware whether the Chief Magistrate investigated that matter or conducted an investigation in relation to that behaviour?

**Mr Mackie:** I cannot answer that. I am not sure if the Chief Magistrate did a formal investigation of that matter.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, have you been informed of that matter, are you aware of it, by the director-general or from other briefings?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No, I am not, sorry. I have met with the Chief Magistrate and it was not something that was raised with me.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Director-General, if what has been alleged is the case and the party involved before the magistrate was in a relationship with that magistrate and that party involved had other prosecutorial roles, for example, would that not call into question the decisions made by that magistrate and potentially open the decisions made by that magistrate and prosecuted by that person with whom the relationship was held into question and subject those to appeal?

**Ms BUSH:** Point of order, Mr Chair. I believe that the line of questioning is hypothetical under standing order 115.

**Ms BATES:** You should know the standing orders. It is not out of order.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** With all due respect, Mr Chair, it is a matter that has been raised with the director-general.

**CHAIR:** Would you like to rephrase or perhaps limit it to one question at a time?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Yes, certainly. I am happy to do that. Has the department made any provision in relation to appeals that may be made as a result of the relationship between the magistrate and someone in the role of prosecutor and is it preparing to respond to any such appeals?

**Mr Mackie:** No, I have not. If the matter was of significant issue I would have thought the Chief Magistrate would have written to me formally. He may have taken some action of his own right.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Has the magistrate been relocated from the previous court that they were in to another court?

**Mr Mackie:** I am unaware. I would have to ask the Chief Magistrate. He controls those movements.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Chair, I can get back to the member for Currumbin about liquor licence transfers. I can advise that there is no formal KPI for transfer applications, but the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation has internal benchmarks which it continually reviews with the aim of improving. It is important to note that the purpose of an application is to check the suitability of the prospective business operator. The period for an application is variable. Obviously it aligns with property settlement. If there is a prolonged settlement, the application can be protracted. That is obviously outside the control of the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation.

The most common issues, as I mentioned, are incomplete forms, lack of supporting documentation, substantiated police checks, reluctance on the part of the current licensee to provide information and a range of mandated requirements under the Gaming Machine Act 1991 for a concurrent application if the business operates gaming machines—which is often the case. Improvements rolled out by OLGR in early 2020 were aimed at educating applicants to initially lodge more fulsome details and submissions, as well as improving OLGR's internal governance and management of the transfer process. More significantly, the OLGR is now implementing risk based process improvements that provide greater autonomy to processing officers, reduce processing blockages and allow for an expedited experience for the majority of transfer applicants.

You will be pleased to know that the processing time has reduced to 34 days. This expedited approach is consistent with OLGR's direction for licensing processes in general which is also supported by the recent launch of an online services hub for individual licences which incorporates risk based processing. Early data indicates this initiative has reduced processing times from 29 days to four days for new individual occupational applications and 23 days to two days for renewals.

**Mrs GERBER:** You said there are no formal KPIs but there are benchmarks. Can you tell us what those benchmarks are, particularly having relevance to the fact that there is a lag time of over 48 days of processing? What are the benchmarks?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As I just said, the processing time has now been reduced to 34 days. I have just talked about the internal benchmarks which include improvements aimed at educating applicants to initially lodge more fulsome details which has brought down application time frames. There is a range of internal benchmarks which is continually reviewed. Clearly they are meeting those benchmarks because the time frame keeps coming down.

**Ms CAMM:** Attorney, will you advise when the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service, which is free and confidential for all women attending the Brisbane Magistrates Court when applying for or responding to a violence protection order, will be rolled out to other regions across Queensland to allow access to justice?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We again have an election commitment to keep rolling out our specialist domestic and family violence courts which do provide a range of domestic violence services for victims. As I said, obviously we have a service operating at Brisbane but our specialist courts are at Southport, Beenleigh and Townsville, with circuits to Mount Isa and Palm Island. We will be rolling out more of those initiatives over the coming months and certainly during this term.

**Ms CAMM:** Are they currently being prioritised for rural and remote communities or those with a high prevalence of DV across regions? How will they be prioritised?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes. When we make decisions about where we continue to roll out these services, we look at where the high prevalence of domestic and family violence order applications are made.

**Ms CAMM:** Will the minister advise between 2018-19 and 2020-21—to date if possible—the locations of where each domestic violence duty lawyer service has been established across the state through Legal Aid Queensland and the number of specialist domestic violence duty lawyers across the state broken down via each court where, in addition, there is specific training provided to duty lawyers for that specialist DV service?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am happy to get some information for the member around the duty lawyer service. As I mentioned earlier in the previous session, Legal Aid have been doing a fantastic job in supporting victims of domestic and family violence. Would you like me to run through all of the locations at which the domestic and family violence duty lawyer services are provided? They are on the website.

**Ms CAMM:** That would be great if you are happy to table it, Minister.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am not going to table the brief, but it is on the Legal Aid website which is publicly available.

**Ms BATES:** Attorney-General, a number of years ago the government funded research into sons assaulting their mother. I think I was with you when it was announced. From memory, the research age was from 18 to 21. Police are now finding that sons aged 21 to 30 are perpetrators, and that is increasing. Does the minister know how many additional victims there have been given that it now seems to be older perpetrators who are living at home with their families?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I do not have that information with me. I would imagine that it is a matter for police. I am happy to get back to the member on some statistics around sons committing domestic violence against their mother and whether or not there has been an increase in the ages that we have seen for perpetrators.

**Ms BATES:** Could we have some of the results of that research that you funded when you were the minister?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Again, I would have to check where that is up to. I am happy to get you information about any court statistics in that space.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Attorney, you have just mentioned the court reporting and transcription service. I think you indicated \$41 million is being proposed to be spent in relation to that service. The website had not been updated. At least last week when I looked it said, '2019—consultation ongoing'. Have you now entered into a contract for the provision of those services? Is that contract with the same provider, Auscript, or is it with a new provider or are the services coming back in-house?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Auscript was unsuccessful during the tender process. I understand there are two new providers we are working with. As I mentioned, we have extended the deadline for that to start.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** To 1 July?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Are those providers based in Australia or are they providers that are foreign owned or with an Australian subsidiary?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I am advised they are both Australian companies.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So they are Australian companies. They are not Australian subsidiaries of foreign companies like IBM or that sort of thing?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I would have to double-check. I am pretty sure my advice is that they are both Australian companies.

**Mr Mackie:** Yes. I believe that, but we will check if there any other—

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Mr Mackie is an expert because he oversaw the Auscript tender as well. That is always nice to remember, isn't it, Mr Mackie? Some of us do.

**Mr Mackie:** I am glad you remember me.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I do.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** There are probably a few other things he remembers about that time.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** I remember many things. Don't worry. The other issue is that in the Capital Statement I cannot see under the 'Justice and Public Safety' heading where that \$41 million is accounted for. I can see 'leasehold improvements' of \$1.2 million. I can see 'minor capital works—software' of \$3.1 million. I can see \$956,000 for the Queensland courts information systems. I could not see it in the SDS. It has been three years since I have been at estimates, so I might be a bit rusty. Perhaps it might be somewhere else.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Don't you study the SDS every year, member?

**Mr Mackie:** My chief financial adviser says that the capital costs majority wise associated with it were in the 2019-20 financial year. What is happening now is really operating costs, which would be in the operating section of our statement for this year, 2020-21.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** So the capital costs were in 2019-20, but the contracts that have just been entered into were in 2020-21. Is it carried over or is it showing in here in the Capital Statement?

**Mr Mackie:** I am just being advised that some of the contracts themselves were entered into in 2019-20.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Right, of the \$41 million?

**Mr Mackie:** Yes.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** How much was entered into last year and how much was entered into this year? I also notice that there is very little in the SDS in relation to that. The consolidated balance sheet is not there—and I also happened to notice that all the other departments have not provided a balance sheet either. That is just by the by.

**Mr Mackie:** Member, I will try to get back to you before the end of this session. I will give you a split between the 2019-20 and 2020-21 costs.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** That would be great.

**Ms CMM:** Minister, on a recent visit to Townsville engaging with the women's service, I met with many staff there in relation to the increased demand that they had received on the back of the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular around homelessness services as a result of domestic or family violence. As part of their increased funding that was received under the Commonwealth and the COVID-19 grants, they are seeking assurance that this higher demand will continue to be met in some way, shape or form. Given that currently some of their victims are facing up to \$700 a week for motel accommodation as part of the lack of crisis accommodation that they can access, will your department look at, as part of the budget, a no worse off standard of service given the increased demand on the back of COVID-19?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are working with the sector to monitor that demand. As you identified, there was \$25 million from the Commonwealth, which the Queensland government got out the door to frontline services incredibly quickly, as well as \$7 million from the state government. As part of that funding there was \$824,000 to further enhance crisis and post-crisis accommodation to support those affected by domestic and family violence, and we have provided top-up money to all of those services. We will continue to work with the sector to monitor demand. DVConnect was also provided with additional funding to support the increase in demand. Last week I announced the latest round of funding where domestic and family violence services can apply for between \$50,000 and \$150,000 to help them meet COVID demand, including temporary staff. We have provided additional funding. We are monitoring the demand, and we will continue to work with the sector.

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the Attorney. Does funding for community legal centres now include assistance with legal matters involving QBCC, QCAT and WorkCover, which had previously not been funded when federal funding was rescinded about three or four years ago?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Many of our community legal services are funded, including the Caxton Legal Service, to deal with employment matters. There are only a few matters that are dealt with when it comes to WorkCover. Any personal injury matters being dealt with by WorkCover are currently not funded. There are a range of matters where Legal Aid and community legal centres will intervene, but they are very restricted. Employment matters generally are dealt with by community legal services. In terms of WorkCover matters, it is only those matters that are being dealt with outside of WorkCover—so personal injury matters—in limited circumstances.

**Ms BOLTON:** Because it has been such a big issue, especially regarding assistance with QBCC, will this be reviewed?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** When determining whether Legal Aid funding in relation to these matters should be provided there is a merits test, a reasonable prospect of success test and the self-funding litigant test. If there is an appeal in relation to a WorkCover matter, Legal Aid Queensland will consider the reasons for the decision, medical reports and other reasons why they believe it would be suitable to appeal. We work with the Commonwealth on Legal Aid funding in relation to what matters are covered. I am certainly happy to continue to raise this issue. There is help for appeals and certain matters, but any WorkCover or Q-Comp matters are usually not currently funded.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Director-General, how many disputes subject to the COVID rental protections for residential tenancies were lodged with QCAT and how many are still to be resolved?

**Mr Mackie:** I do not have that information on me right now. I will endeavour to try to get that before the end of the session.

**Dr MacMAHON:** How many eviction proceedings in QCAT took place from March 2020 until the end of the eviction moratorium in September 2020?

**Mr Mackie:** Again I do not have that data readily available, but I will try to get it to you before the end of the session.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** In relation to the question regarding victims of sons assaulting their mothers aged 21 to 30, I am advised that to obtain that information would require a manual search of the court files,

which is obviously not possible. That is a question that could be directed to Minister Ryan in terms of police data.

**Ms BOLTON:** Attorney, in relation to question on notice No. 10 regarding personal emergency safety devices, do we have a rollout date for those and who they will be available to, including those who have cases and histories that indicate they really do need them?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Having looked at the report from ANROWS about this kind of technology, we are close monitoring developments in this space. Through the Keeping Women Safe in Their Home initiative we have trialled a range of new and emerging technologies to help improve the safety of women and children and enable them to remain in their own homes following the completion of a comprehensive risk assessment. The technologies to be trialled include: personal duress alarms with 24/7 monitoring through an external security service; CCTV home security cameras; victim focussed smartphone technology; and electronic sweep scans and debugging of victims' homes and belongings for surveillance technology.

We are continuing to investigate the idea of electronic monitoring and tracking to improve the safety of women and children and we are monitoring developments in that space. We are trialling some initiatives using technology to keep women safe in their homes, and we will continue to work with the sector to roll out these initiatives.

**Ms BOLTON:** You do not have a date?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No.

**Dr MacMAHON:** In relation to the government's commitment to refer the decriminalisation of sex work to the Queensland Law Reform Commission, will the government rule out any consideration of a Nordic model in its terms of reference to the commission?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** As best I can recollect, there is no reference to that in the terms of reference that have been developed with the sector.

**Dr MacMAHON:** And no consideration to rule it out?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** We are working with the sector on the terms of reference.

**CHAIR:** Moving to government members, I call the member for Caloundra.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, with reference to page 67 of the SDS and the department's priority to support domestic and family violence and sexual violence service providers, could the Attorney-General outline what additional support has been provided to these services, especially in light of COVID and the increase in demand?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Chair, 2020 has proven especially challenging for so many Queensland women and families. In light of COVID the issue of domestic and family violence is more relevant than ever. As the United Nations has said, domestic violence is a shadow pandemic and it continues to persist across all society. One in six Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner. Almost one in 10 women in a relationship experienced domestic violence during the COVID crisis, with two-thirds saying attacks started or became worse. Research has consistently demonstrated that domestic and family violence increases during and after disasters, including pandemics, and COVID-19 has seen more people isolated in their homes to prevent the spread of the virus. This isolation can result in more people—mostly women and children—being subjected to more frequent, complex and severe violence.

Early in the year the Palaszczuk government announced an additional \$7.5 million to support domestic and family violence and sexual violence services that were experiencing increased demand whilst also adapting to working during a global pandemic. Working with the federal government, we secured \$25.6 million through the national partnership on COVID-19 domestic and family violence agreement. Through this package, last week I was pleased to announce \$2 million in grants for service providers to help ease the pressure on the sector. Applications will be open until the end of February for grants ranging from \$50,000 to \$150,000 to support one-off innovations like moving programs online, taking on additional staff to meet short-term demand, or continuing to provide counselling using technology.

This latest announcement is on top of the millions of dollars we have already provided to service providers during the pandemic, including: funding to develop an online perpetrator program; enhancement of sexual assault services which experienced additional demand during COVID; providing crucial funding for crisis and post-crisis accommodation; and support for women and families fleeing violence. Of the \$25.64 million we received from the federal government, \$25.32 has already

been allocated over the next two financial years. We have allocated over 98 per cent of the funding. That compares favourably to other jurisdictions, New South Wales only having allocated 47 per cent and South Australia only having allocated 55 per cent. Again I want to thank the office for women and the prevention of domestic and family violence. They worked incredibly hard to get the money out the door to frontline services when they need it most. We have acted quickly and decisively to help service providers scale up and protect victims of violence across Queensland.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, I refer to pages 65 and 66 of the SDS. Can you outline what actions the Office of Fair Trading has taken in terms of regulating the safety of children's toys this Christmas?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Operation Safe Christmas has been underway since September. The wonderful staff at the Office of Fair Trading have reviewed a thousand different toys and visited hundreds of retailers this year to make sure that young children are provided with safe toys. More than 5,600 toy lines have been reviewed and the Office of Fair Trading have identified six toys that have landed on Santa's unsafe list. There were a couple of plush toys, some alphabet and number puzzles, a magnetic number puzzle and also a rainbow circle stacker. More information about these toys is on the website. Basically, these toys provided a choking hazard as they contained small parts. The six toys have been removed from shelves. However, my message is that no amount of safety standards and inspections will always keep kids safe. No toy is completely risk free.

There are some things that people can remember when it comes to kids' toys. Size: the smaller the child the bigger the toy should be, which my five-month-old nephew will be delighted to hear. Parts smaller than a ping-pong ball obviously can choke a child under three years of age. Shape: obviously be wary of products that can be easily swallowed but also have sharp edges. Surface: young kids will put everything in their mouths so make sure that all materials are non-toxic. Strings: anything over 30 centimetres can pose a strangulation hazard for a small child so should be removed. Supervision: nothing replaces close supervision by parents and carers. I would also warn anyone thinking of buying any toys for kids this Christmas to make sure there are secure battery compartments. Make sure that battery covers are secure and that small children cannot access them.

A big thank you to all of our Queensland retailers. Overwhelmingly, the vast majority of retailers are doing the right thing. I would also remind Queenslanders that if you are online shopping for products from overseas please be aware that they can pose a risk if they have not been subjected to the same rigorous safety checks that the Queensland government does. I encourage all consumers to apply the six things to remember when buying toys and keep their eye out for any toys that may be harmful this Christmas.

**CHAIR:** Attorney-General, with reference to pages 65 and 66 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General provide an update on how the government has assisted Queensland liquor licensees to recover from the effects of COVID-19?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Through no fault of their own, the tourism and hospitality sectors, including our restaurants, cafes, bars, clubs and hotels, really did bear the brunt of the necessary COVID-19 restrictions, including travel restrictions and non-essential business closures. The Palaszczuk government acted decisively to implement a range of measures to support businesses as they navigated these challenging times, including: gaming tax deferrals until June next year, worth approximately \$50 million; payroll tax deferrals and refunds; small business grants; low-interest loans; and energy rebates.

Liquor licensees current as at 30 June 2020 also had their 2020-21 annual licence fee waived to an approximate value of \$22.7 million. For a typical small business hotel, this could mean savings of about \$4,000 or even \$700 for a small club. Additionally, the Palaszczuk government waived fees for certain liquor licence applications received between 1 February 2020 and 31 July 2020. These applications to temporarily or permanently change the licensed area or venue trading hours provided licensees with flexibility to adapt and adjust their business model.

From the beginning, Liquor and Gaming and Fair Trading's approach prioritised educating and informing licensed businesses, and enforcement action was only taken where appropriate and in line with guidance prepared by Queensland Health. COVID specific communications were issued to liquor, gaming and other industry sectors. Short newsletters and social media posts directly informed businesses about the regular updates to the Chief Health Officer's directions and the government's road map for easing restrictions. We are committed to ensuring that Queensland businesses emerge from this pandemic more resilient, and we are continuing to support their COVID-19 recovery.

**Ms BUSH:** I refer to page 59 of the SDS. Can the Attorney-General please outline how the government is reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. We are committed to addressing the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in our criminal justice system. Alongside all Australian governments, the Queensland government is working with our First Nation community to implement the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which took effect in July this year. The national agreement contains 16 targets, which include specific justice targets to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration and reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged between 10 and 17 in detention.

The Queensland government delivers several programs which specifically work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people engaged with the justice system and include responses which aim to make the criminal justice system more culturally appropriate. Our criminal justice groups, which are non-government community organisations, receive funding to develop strategies to deal with justice related issues in their communities. Across 40 locations, our community justice groups provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants, victims and families engaged in the court system and provide cultural submissions to the court to inform bail and sentencing decisions.

The 2019-20 budget provided additional funding of \$19.1 million over four years and \$5.4 million per annum ongoing and \$250,000 capital over two years to enhance the community justice program. That will ensure they have appropriate resources to deliver the important court related activities and deliver a broader range of services to their community—for example, prevention or early intervention activities. Our community justice groups are in 15 locations. As the ministerial champion for the Torres Strait, I have been lucky enough to sit down with community justice group members right across the Torres Strait, and they do an incredible job.

Murri Courts also provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including elders and victims, to participate in court processes and ensure defendants take responsibility for offending behaviour. I am hoping that these approaches of working in partnership with communities will lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**Mr HUNT:** Attorney, I refer to page 59 of the SDS. Can the Attorney-General update the committee on the successful reintroduction of specialist courts in Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. The Palaszczuk government committed to reintroducing specialist courts across Queensland at the 2015 election. We committed to not only reintroducing them; we examined how we could do it better.

We have delivered on those commitments. We have re-established the Queensland Drug and Alcohol Court. We established the Court Link program. This is an integrated court assessment referral and support program. It connects participants with treatment and support services to address underlying causes of offending, such as housing, unemployment, addictions, health and other social needs.

We established the specialist domestic and family violence courts to have perpetrators held to account. We established the High Risk Youth Court in Townsville. The court holds high-risk repeat youth offenders to account through monitoring and support by the court. The court also has a dedicated magistrate who case manages young defendants who often have multiple factors which contribute to high-risk future offending. The dedicated magistrate is able to gain an in-depth knowledge of each defendant and monitor their engagement with services to hold them accountable. We re-established the Murri Courts in 14 locations across Queensland. These courts deliver culturally appropriate court processes, respect and acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and refer defendants to services that address underlying causes of behaviour.

Holding offenders to account, whilst also addressing underlying causes of offending behaviour, is important to reducing crime in our community. We must give courts as many sentencing options as possible to achieve these results and to achieve rehabilitation. I want to thank the magistrates who sit in these specialist courts. Seeing the worst in our community every day is not an easy job, but our magistrates do a terrific job.

I want to advise the committee that, in terms of the member for South Brisbane's questions in relation to QCAT, whilst the staff have worked hard to try to get the answers on rental disputes and eviction proceedings at QCAT, we will have to take that on notice. In terms of the member for Clayfield's



question around the breakdown of recording projects and services between capital and operating, we will also take that on notice.

I have one more. In terms of the question around domestic and family violence reform enacted this year, I am pleased to say that legislative reform is one part of the Queensland government's approach to preventing and responding to domestic and family violence. Under our Domestic and Family Violence strategy, we continue our focus on shifting community attitudes and behaviours.

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection COVID-19 Emergency Response Regulation 2020 was made on 14 August 2020 under the modification framework introduced by the COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020. The regulation allowed for private applications for domestic violence protection orders or variations of orders to be filed electronically, provides an alternative mechanism for verifying private applications rather than requiring a statutory declaration and allows a Magistrates Court to conduct proceedings by audio or audiovisual means.

COVID-19 emergency measures under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation COVID-19 Emergency Response Regulation 2020 also included extra protections for persons in residential tenancies or rooming accommodation escaping domestic and family violence during COVID-19. These amendments enable tenants and residents experiencing domestic and family violence to leave a tenancy and cap their liability for end of lease costs to enact plans to end the violence.

On 20 February 2020 the Police Powers and Responsibilities and Other Legislation Amendment Bill was passed. That bill included amendments to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act relating to policing to enable the search of a person given a direction to move and who is transported under section 134A of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act and broaden delegated Queensland Police Service persons to be able to share information for the purposes of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Act.

Whilst no criminal law related domestic and family violence amendments have been enacted since 1 July 2019, given the work already undertaken to implement the recommendations of *Not now, not ever* we have introduced reforms to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to child sexual abuse based on recommendations in the Criminal Justice Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Of course, on 14 September we introduced the Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020.

In addition, on 26 November 2020 the government reintroduced the Criminal Code (Consent and Mistake of Fact) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020 implementing recommendations by the Queensland Law Reform Commission. There has been quite a bit happening this year.

**CHAIR:** Attorney-General, as outlined on page 67 of the SDS, the department will continue to facilitate the Women on Boards initiative. Can you advise what other actions the government is taking to promote gender equality? Is the attorney aware of any alternative approaches?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, Chair. After the member for Mudgeeraba's question earlier, I am delighted to have this question about women on boards. We know gender equality leads to better social and economic outcomes for all, but it can only be achieved when women and men work across all parts of our community together.

The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of supporting women into positions of leadership and ensuring that the views and experiences of women are incorporated at Queensland's highest levels. I am very pleased to report that we exceeded our target of 50 per cent representation of women on Queensland government boards by 2020. Of course, when we came into government we were sitting at only 31 per cent. Now, we are currently at 54 per cent. In the past year, the Queensland government department also surpassed the 30 per cent gender equity target set by the Law Council of Australia. We saw 32.8 per cent of briefs sent to female barristers and more than 30 per cent of the \$21.9 million in fees paid to female barristers.

Amongst the Labor Party caucus ranks, we have so many strong, hardworking women parliamentarians who are here to make sure we continue to deliver for women—21 strong and passionate women to be precise. Of those opposite, the member for Mudgeeraba is of course one of six women. At least there is one more than the number of either Marks or Michaels in parliament, but maybe I am not being quite fair to the six women of the LNP caucus! It is not about quantity or quality. When it comes to empowering Queensland women, maybe the member for Nanango herself said it best when asked about whether or not the LNP would support targets for women on boards—

... if you ever, ever have to get a job because you are a woman. Well, work a bit harder.

Even when women do apparently work hard enough, who could forget the member for Everton who said that the Queensland Parole Board had too many women? In July this year it was revealed that the LNP subjected women to extreme vetting during the preselection process, asking about their sexual preferences, history of sexual relationships and family commitments, all of which questions were not asked of men seeking preselection. But what would we expect from the LNP when three-quarters of the staff from the Office for Women were cut when it was last in government, or when it abandoned the women on boards target, as I said, which fell to 30 per cent? It even went to the trouble of legislating to change the name of the CCC chairperson to 'chairman'. Clearly the LNP—

**Ms Bates** interjected.

**CHAIR:** The member for Mudgeeraba! You are being disorderly.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** Thank you, Chair. I am incredibly proud of the Palaszczuk government's achievements when it comes to gender equality here in Queensland. I am delighted, being again the Minister for Women, that we will get to oversee a new women's strategy for Queensland next year.

**Ms BUSH:** Attorney, I refer to page 58 of the SDS and the Palaszczuk government's commitment to fair resolution of disputes. Can the Attorney-General outline to the committee the program of capital works for our court buildings?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Under the Palaszczuk government, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General capital program has focused on upgrading a number of courthouses across the state to improve functionality and to better accommodate the diverse stakeholders and court partners who use the courts on a daily basis.

As the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and Minister for Women, I am pleased to advise that improving security, domestic and family violence facilities and overall courthouse functionality will continue to be a key focus this financial year, along with expanding videoconference capability to assist participants and the justice system more generally, reduce costs and improve security through minimising travel and prisoner transfers throughout Queensland.

I can report on the following key updates which were concluded during 2019-20: \$12 million to the Rockhampton courthouse upgrade which included full external refurbishment, an access ramp for people with a disability, enclosed balconies, and rectification of water ingress issues; \$9 million for the Townsville courthouse upgrade which included a new domestic and family violence courtroom, increasing the number of magistrates courts from five to six, a secure domestic and family violence area and entrance and exit for domestic and family violence clients, new interview and conference rooms, and a refurbished Magistrates Court registry; \$11 million for the Beenleigh courthouse upgrade which included a new domestic and family violence courtroom, increasing the number of courtrooms from seven to eight, secure area and access for domestic and family violence clients, and a refurbished Magistrates Court registry; a refurbished Bundaberg courthouse; improved domestic and family facilities at Richlands courthouse; completed the departmental leasehold improvement program including fit-out works for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions at Beenleigh and Townsville; and Liquor, Gaming and Fair Trading Offices in Cairns.

Members of the committee might be interested to know that my department has a charter of local content built into all construction tenders and encouraged the use of local businesses and subcontractors for the \$28.3 million 2019-20 program of work. Some 94 full-time equivalent jobs were directly supported within the construction industry. In 2020-21, the department will continue its capital building works program to upgrade interview rooms, improve dock security and access for people with a disability, address workplace health and safety issues and improve security for the public, victims of crime, staff and the judiciary.

The following key projects are expected to be completed in 2020-21: construction of the \$1.6 million Pine Rivers courthouse domestic and family violence upgrade; finalisation and design of the Brisbane Magistrates Court security and cells upgrade project; and upgrade of nine lifts across Brisbane Supreme and District Courts and Brisbane Magistrates Court. The \$14.5 million program is expected to directly support 48 full-time equivalent jobs.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 67 of the SDS, can the Attorney-General please advise the committee of the achievements of the Queensland Women Strategy and what the future of the strategy will be?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Our Queensland Women Strategy sets out Queensland's vision for a community that represents women, embraces gender equality and promotes and protects the rights, interests and wellbeing of women and girls. We have a strong track record. As

I have talked about, we have met our target of women on government boards and bodies. Queensland led the nation, becoming the first state to legislate 10 days' paid domestic and family violence leave for Queensland employees. In 2018, the Queensland government passed historic laws so that Queensland women can now legally access termination of pregnancy services, removing it from the Criminal Code. Women have been supported to gain employment and the skills required to re-enter the workforce. More than 28,000 women have benefitted from Skilling Queenslanders for Work, with more than half of whom securing a job is a direct result of participating in SQW. The Back to Work program has supported over 10,000 women back into employment since 2016.

We know that COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted women. Despite this progress, there is much work to do across all sectors of our community to continue our work towards achieving gender equality in Queensland. As our Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Kate Jenkins, notes, Australian women make up the majority of health workers on the front line, as well as in those industries heavily impacted by social distancing restrictions such as tourism and hospitality. At home, women are primarily responsible for the care of children and domestic work, both of which increased during the pandemic.

With the number of women joining the jobless queue outnumbering men, it has never been more important to focus on supporting women's economic participation and resilience. It is vital that the new Queensland Women's Strategy continues this theme and supports rebuilding women's economic security. We will be working with and through partner organisations and peak bodies to seek the views and priorities of Queensland women to renew and refresh the Queensland Women's Strategy. I look forward to beginning consultation next year as we continue to work to empower Queensland women.

**Mr Mackie:** Chair, we took a question on notice earlier from the member for Clayfield about the recording and transcription breakup between 2019-20 and 2020-21. The answer has just come in. In 2019-20 the budget in operating funds was \$4.508 million and in capital funds was \$2.501 million. Then in 2020-21 operating funds are \$3.901 million and capital is \$1.898 million. There is then—this is why the \$46.3 million that I think you looked at, member, was not reflected in the statements. It is centrally held by Queensland Treasury at the moment. We apply to have those funds released once the contracts are in place and we have done the implementation work. That \$46.3 million over six years will be for services—paying for the services, not the project.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Where do you find it in these documents? You don't?

**Mr Mackie:** The \$46.3 million is not with the department of justice at the moment; it is held centrally in Treasury. It would be somewhere in Treasury, however they account for it in their statements. We have to get that released to us this year.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** And that is over six years?

**Mr Mackie:** That is for over six years, yes.

**CHAIR:** Attorney-General, with reference to SDS page 59, can you please outline the Palaszczuk government's continued support for community legal centres in Queensland?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I thank the member for the question. Legal assistance services delivered by Legal Aid Queensland, community organisations and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service are vital to ensuring equitable access to justice throughout Queensland. I am proud that the Palaszczuk government has included \$5.6 million worth of additional funding for community legal centres over 2020-2025, as included in the 2019-20 budget. That amounts to more than \$554 million of funding over the next five years towards the delivery of legal assistance services by Legal Aid Queensland and CLCs, demonstrating the Palaszczuk government's significant commitment to the legal assistance sector.

In May 2020 the Queensland government undertook a significant procurement process to allocate Queensland and Commonwealth funding for the delivery of legal assistance services by CLCs. As we have already spoken about today, 24 community legal centres were successful and were allocated \$112 million for the delivery of services over the next five years. This provides increased funding certainty for community legal services. It allows them to retain experienced staff and to better plan for services when they have that certainty of funding.

In addition to the many generalist CLCs providing services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the state, specific allocations have been made to LawRight, which will receive close to a quarter of a million dollars per year over the next five years to continue its Indigenous health check program called Law Yarn in Cairns. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services in North Queensland has continued funding of over \$650,000 per annum, or \$3.43 million over

2020-2025, to continue its important work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the far north.

Although there is always more work to do, I am proud of the efforts of our community legal services across Queensland and the important work they do with many of our vulnerable Queenslanders and particularly the work they did this year during COVID-19.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure for the justice and Attorney-General portfolio has expired. I note that there are four outstanding questions.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** I think it is two.

**CHAIR:** Are there any questions taken on notice that you wish to answer now?

**Ms FENTIMAN:** No. Chair, just so we can be clear, it is the QCAT questions from the member for South Brisbane that have been taken on notice. Everything else I think we have gotten back to members about.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** There are certainly a lot of people scuttling around like ladybirds out the back there—looking at their phones and getting those answers.

**Ms FENTIMAN:** That is democracy in action!

**Mr NICHOLLS:** They did not know where the answer was either!

**CHAIR:** There was a question that the director-general took on notice in relation to the ownership of the companies that were successful.

**Mr Mackie:** I agree. We are going to find out the detail of that, yes. In relation to the questions on disputes and evictions, 452 COVID-19 tenancy disputes were lodged with QCAT and nine remain to be resolved. Some 111 COVID related evictions took place between 29 March and 30 September 2020. The other question I think the Attorney is happy to take on notice.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The committee has resolved that answers to questions taken on notice must be provided to the committee secretariat by 3 pm on Wednesday, 16 December 2020. You can check the exact wording of any outstanding questions in the proof transcript of this session of the hearing which will be available on the Hansard page of parliament's website within approximately two hours. Thank you, Attorney-General and officers, for your attendance. The committee will now adjourn for a break. The hearing will resume at 1.30 pm with the examination of estimates for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.46 pm to 1.30 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—LEGAL AFFAIRS AND SAFETY COMMITTEE—POLICE AND  
CORRECTIVE SERVICES, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES****In Attendance**

Hon. MT Ryan, Minister for Police and Minister for Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services

Ms E McIntyre, Chief of Staff

**Queensland Police Service**

Ms K Carroll, Commissioner

Mr S Gollschewski, Deputy Commissioner, COVID Command and Southern Queensland

Mr S Chelepy, Assistant Commissioner, COVID Command

Mr D Smith, Deputy Commissioner, Strategy and Corporate Services

**Queensland Corrective Services**

Mr P Martin APM, Commissioner, Office of the Commissioner

Mr R Wood, Chief of Staff

Mr J Koulouris, Deputy Commissioner, Organisational Capability

**Queensland Fire and Emergency Services**


Mr G Leach, Commissioner

Mr A Stevenson, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Chief Strategy Officer

**Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management**

Mr A Dawson, Inspector-General, Emergency Management

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 **CHAIR:** This afternoon the committee will examine the proposed expenditure in the appropriation bill 2020 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio until 5.15 pm and we will suspend proceedings during this time for two breaks between 2.45 pm and 3 pm and 4 pm and 4.15 pm. I welcome Mr Dale Last, the member for Burdekin, who has joined us on the committee.

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

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

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

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

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Chair. Good afternoon, committee members and the people of Queensland who are tuning in. The severe weather we are experiencing across the south-east is a graphic reminder of the vital role our frontline services play in keeping our communities safe. Whether it be the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the Queensland Police Service, the State Emergency Service or paramedics, they all work together to keep people safe. That is why this government invests so significantly in the front line. For example, what the last election shows and this recent state budget proves is that there will always be more police in Queensland under Labor.

The Palaszczuk government's 2020-21 record total police budget of \$2.65 billion, made up of \$2.51 billion for operating expenses and another \$146 million for capital programs, contributes to the biggest boost to policing in Queensland in three decades. This historic investment is entirely fitting given the integral role police have played on the borders, keeping Queenslanders safe from the pandemic. It is because of this—the Palaszczuk government's strong health response—that we can continue delivering our plan for economic recovery for Queensland.

The 2020-21 budget supports the rollout of an extra 2,025 police personnel over five years. The delivery of those extra resources began on 1 July this year, with intakes of new recruits already progressing through Queensland's two police academies. The extra personnel will give police an enhanced capability to not only respond to crime but also disrupt and prevent crime. In addition, the record police budget includes funds which support a \$300 million, five-year capital works program that will deliver new police infrastructure right across the state whilst also supporting jobs for local builders and tradies.

The record police budget also supports a number of other important initiatives, including the rollout of mobile police beats. Mobile police beats are an innovation of the commissioner and she was keen to introduce them as a means of delivering a heightened police presence in local communities. This government will support the delivery of 25 mobile police beats which are effectively police stations on wheels that can be quickly deployed wherever they are needed.

The Palaszczuk government's record police budget will also support the rollout of new police equipment over five years, including more than 12,000 integrated load-bearing ballistic vests for police officers to do their job. These vests are a combination of ballistic vest, a load-bearing vest and a reflector vest to deliver the best protection. It is intended that the integrated load-bearing ballistic vest will be sourced from a Queensland supplier, sustaining local jobs and supporting local business.

Also, an extra 4,500 body worn cameras will be included in our historic investment. This investment means the total body worn camera fleet will number more than 12,000, making it one of the largest fleets in the world. This is only fitting because the Queensland Police Service was the first jurisdiction in Australasia to adopt a body worn camera regime. Our commitment also includes an extra 250 police vehicles for the front line. The Queensland Police Service is world class and the Palaszczuk government's watershed investments in policing will further enhance our internationally recognised capability. Make no mistake about it: this is an historic investment in policing.

Our police have performed magnificently during what has been an extraordinary year. Just last night there was a reminder of the dangers our police and police dogs face. In Toowoomba an officer and his police dog were stabbed by a man who had broken into a house, but in the latest news I can confirm that our Dog Squad officer has been released from hospital and his police dog Turbo is also back home after being stabbed in the chest several times. Sadly, the perpetrator died after sustaining a medical episode and I wish to express my condolences to his family. As is always the case, Ethical Standards Command and the CCC are investigating on behalf of the Coroner.

I thank each and every member of the Queensland Police Service for their service to Queensland and their community partners for helping together to keep our community safe and to keep Queensland safe.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. Before I hand over to non-government members, I welcome Michael Berkman MP, the member for Maiwar, who has joined the committee. I hand over to the deputy chair, the member for Currumbin.

**Mrs GERBER:** Thanks, Chair. I will hand over to the member for Burdekin for his line of questioning.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Chair. My first question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, what is the maximum number of recruits that can be trained in Queensland's two police academies each year?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Thank you, member. I will get you the exact numbers, but the capacity is quite large. Depending on what the intake is, we can be very flexible, from a couple of hundred to a thousand. Whilst I do not have the exact numbers in front of me, we can ramp up or ramp down as we see fit.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what was the approved number of recruits for the 2020-21 financial year prior to the government's election announcement?

**Commissioner Carroll:** If you will bear with me, I will not take it on notice but I will get the figures to you whilst we are still at the table, if that is okay. The numbers obviously might have changed, but I will get that to you just before we finish up.

**Mr LAST:** That is fine. Commissioner, how many sworn officers left the QPS last financial year—that is, 2019-20?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Obviously that needs to also be calculated. I could only approximately give you that answer, but once again my staff will be working on that as we speak and I will give it to you by the end of questioning today.

**Mr LAST:** Are you confident that given the commitment by the government of 2,025 officers over five years, along with your current recruitment—

**CHAIR:** Before you go on, just be careful, member for Burdekin. You are seeking an opinion from the first part of that question. Could you rephrase the question, please?

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, does the Queensland Police Service have the resources to train the additional officers that are not only being trained and recruited this financial year, but also the additional officers announced by the Premier as part of the election campaign?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Thank you for that question, member. I am extraordinarily confident that we have the agility and the flexibility in two academies and also the staff to deliver that. There have been many occasions where we have put a considerable amount of recruits through and other occasions maybe just a couple of hundred a year, so it is very flexible in how we do that. However, I have to say I am extraordinarily pleased with the announcement of 2,025. They are not just police officers; there are also civilians included in that, as well as liaison officers.

**Mr LAST:** Could you give me the breakdown then of what the sworn and unsworn staff in that figure of 2,025 is, thanks?

**Commissioner Carroll:** The 2,025 police officer positions are 1,450. An additional 575 will be police civilian positions and some of those positions will be watch house officers, prosecutors and police liaison officers. There is a whole array of civilian and non-police positions.

**Mr LAST:** I will come back to that when I get those figures regarding the attrition rate in this bracket. How many Queensland Police Service officers were utilised to provide roadblock services at airports and to provide services at quarantine facilities as part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Thank you for that question and you are correct, there was an array of jobs that we had to do: quarantine, home isolation, compliance checks and international borders as well as domestic borders and the road borders. On any given day that could have ranged—from when we started ramping up to when we got to the height of it—up to about 1,200 police a day. It was not always 1,200. That would have been at the peak. However, on many occasions it might have been at 200 or 300. An example of that was obviously when we stopped attending to road borders recently. That released 250 staff back. For further detail I can refer to the officers in charge of that—that was either Steve Gollschewski, the deputy, or Assistant Commissioner Shane Chelepy—who are here today as well.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, if you would not mind.

**Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski:** To give you some figures, as at 6 December, over 205,000 shifts have been dedicated to COVID-19 duties during the response. That includes duties in relation to quarantine: road border controls, airport border controls, operations coordination, compliance investigation and our remote community operations. Bearing in mind, as the commissioner alluded to, throughout the response we have had different requirements for how we responded—for instance, when the Indigenous communities were subject to the biosecurity arrangements, we had to have a dedicated response and lockdown of those communities. To give an example, for the month of October 2020, we used on a daily basis on average 730 officers. They were spread across hotel quarantine right down to remote community operations, with the hotel quarantine taking on average 330 officers per day. For the month of November that was reduced to 645 through ongoing arrangements where we have reviewed our operations. Of course, throughout the response, as the Chief Health Officer's directions have changed and we are required to adjust our posture, we have had to adjust what resources we have committed to that. The command does very detailed logistical planning around what we need on any given day in order to respond to that. As we have seen the relaxation of the restrictions, we have reduced the number of police involved.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Can you tell me, out of those numbers, how many were seconded from the Road Policing Command?

**Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski:** We will get that figure to you by the end. Road policing is like any other part of the organisation, and we drew resources from across all areas of the organisation including operational and non-operational areas. For instance, in the responses in the South-East region on the Gold Coast there were officers from all over the state that supported that at varying times. It was not just a matter of one area. We used State Crime Command, we used others. I will have to come back with the exact number for the total operation.

**CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take that on notice or come back to us at the end?

**Mr RYAN:** If we cannot answer by the end I will take it on notice, but I think we will be able to answer it by the end of today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr LAST:** Deputy Commissioner, how many of those officers utilised for those duties were taken off Task Force Maxima?

**Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski:** At any given time or across the entire—

**Mr LAST:** Across the entire.

**Deputy Commissioner Gollschewski:** Again we will have to seek that figure.

**Mr LAST:** My next question is to the commissioner. The Transport and Main Roads Queensland Road Crash Weekly Report shows the total fatalities in 2020 is 21.5 per cent higher than 2019 and 13 per cent higher than the average from 2015-2019. Given the increase in the road toll, why were Road Policing Command personnel re-tasked to COVID-19 duties?

**Mr RYAN:** Point of order, Chair. That is asking for an opinion under the standing orders.

**Mr POWELL:** The question was 'why were'. It is not asking for an opinion.

**Mr LAST:** I am asking for a reason.

**CHAIR:** Could you rephrase the question?

**Mr POWELL:** It does not need rephrasing, Chair. It is not asking for an opinion.

**CHAIR:** You are asking why.

**Mrs GERBER:** As in why were they deployed? Where is the opinion?

**CHAIR:** The question why raises the opinion.

**Mr RYAN:** I am sure the commissioner is happy to answer that.

**Commissioner Carroll:** I am happy to answer that.

**Mr RYAN:** I am just setting the boundaries early.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Sadly, we have seen an increase in road deaths this year, particularly in a number of areas. In most regions it is actually at the level of last year or below. Those areas are Wide Bay, Mackay and the South-East. I wanted to say that from the very outset. Sadly, some of those crashes included multiple people in the one crash and young people exceptionally so. What we found, and I will touch on this before I fully answer your question, is that through this period of time we have had more people speeding at exponentially higher speeds.

As the commissioner, I feel it is my responsibility to allocate where I think the resources need to be used. In any disaster, and a pandemic is very, very similar to that, it is incredibly important in terms of community safety to put those resources where I need to put them. Yes, some people from road safety were definitely used at the borders, as was the RAP, as were people from the academy, crime ops, you name it—across the state. Wherever we could we got that balance right. However, at the end of the day I have to balance the needs of the entire organisation. We have come off an amazing year in terms of road safety. Last year was the best year ever and certainly there has been a downward trend over the years. We have worked, even in recent weeks, with all of our partner agencies to make sure that we are on the roads deterring people from doing the things they should not be doing. However, it is everyone's responsibility and I will give you an example of this. In some of our road crashes or fatalities, still 25 per cent of people are not wearing seatbelts. From when you are a young child we all know that we need to wear seatbelts and it is still not happening. I think the best enforcement, the best deterrence, is not going to stop some of those issues.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you, Commissioner. Given your response and the statistics contained in report 1196 and the facts that are recorded in the QPS annual report 2019-20, there were 12,000 less speeding infringement notices excluding camera detected offences, a 12 per cent reduction in seatbelt



infringement notices, a 27½ per cent reduction in mobile phone offence infringements and an almost 24 per cent reduction in the number of RBTs. Is the Queensland Police Service being adequately funded to tackle the rise in Queensland's road toll?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I believe we have the resources to deal with those issues. Some of those were directly related to directives from the CHO where we could not apply drug testing and breath testing for a continued period of time. Some of that was as a direct result of the pandemic. Dramatically I think there might have been several weeks, and I would have to give you the exact amount of time, but there were a number of weeks where we could not carry out those duties.

I do believe that, as the head of the agency and the commissioner, I should use the people where I think we need them best. At a time of community crisis, particularly around community safety, we used those people with agility and flexibility. However, they are all getting back to business where they should be. Enforcement did continue. Enforcement continued across crime and across roads. We did the best we could under the most difficult of circumstances.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, have you undertaken any studies comparing the amount of time that police spend doing proactive duties as opposed to reactive duties and how does that specifically relate to the road toll?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Evidence clearly shows, whether it be in crime, mental health or road policing, that prevention is always best. That is why the Queensland Police Service strategy has moved to prevention, disruption, response and investigation. You would be well aware that I conducted a review some 12 months ago that looked at just this issue, the demand on the policing service. As a result, when you are responding you are not proactive and preventing enough. Our strategy into the future is to actually move that into the front end and then obviously you respond less. I am well aware of the evidence there and certainly it is prevention and being proactive. The evidence clearly shows that that is the best way to go in terms of anything, not just policing issues.

**Mr LAST:** How has that figure on proactive and reactive changed over the past three years?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I would say that in the past three years it probably has not changed much at all and I will give you an example of that. The review clearly showed that in the last five years demand for service has dramatically increased: some 45 per cent in terms of calls for service and higher in terms of triple 0 calls. If you are always reacting to demand, you actually have less time to prevent and be proactive.

What I have implemented or started in the organisation is the Service Alignment Program. The Service Alignment Program will create optimisation for our front line to be able to be more preventive and proactive. I will give an example of that. That really is about putting the resources where they are required. That is aligning the commands. I had nine commands sitting in the south-east and five in the regions. We have now flipped that. There will be seven regions in the very near future and some of those commands are coming together. Intelligence commands and crime ops are coming together into one command. That allows me to move more people to the front end where the demand is. The demand is clearly in the areas of general duties, CIB, CPIU, coms and Policelink. That is where the greatest demand is. The strategy of the future is to put the resource at the front end where they are required and where the most demand is, so that as well as respond we can spend a lot more time in the prevention space.

On the evidence and with the work that we have started here, we have already got some great success in better optimisation and triaging between Policelink and the communication centre, as well as how those jobs are delivered into the districts. Within the next year or two I will guarantee, and the evidence clearly shows this, that we will be optimising what we can do and those efficiencies will be created with more prevention in the front end.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, you just referred to the Queensland Police Service strategic review, which was completed on 6 December 2019. Does the QPS have any plans during the term of this parliament through its goal to 'drive improvements in efficiency and effectiveness' to close any police establishments?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I cannot answer that question for the entire state because we have not looked at the entire state yet. I can say that there would never be a closure of a police station without proper evidence, without proper research and without full consultation with community, local members, the mayors et cetera. There has to be a very good reason to do that. However, if there are better models to work to, we need to have that conversation as well. It is a vast state. At the moment I cannot see—

and we have not done the demand modelling everywhere, but certainly with the growth that we are anticipating, particularly in the south-east—that would be the case in the near future.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, you talked about mobile police beats. Are there plans to close what are currently known as police beats and will the mobile police beats take the place of permanent police establishments?

**Commissioner Carroll:** In some areas, yes, that may be the case and I will give an example why. Some of our suburbs have police beats in houses. If that suburb dramatically changes, we are still stuck with that beat in that house for an extended period, whereas action or demand has moved elsewhere. We are in such a rigidly structured situation when we do that. What the mobile police beat allows us to do is to move to where the demand is. It is incredibly important to be able to do that because at the moment we are not agile enough.

With a mobile police beat, if our analysis shows that demand is high on a Friday night in certain streets of Cairns, it can be moved to that. If it shows that it is high in other parts of Cairns early on a Monday morning, it can be moved to that. Under the current structure of beats that is not the case at all, so it gives us extraordinary flexibility into the future. It is a police station in a van.

**Mrs GERBER:** Commissioner, I have a quick follow-up question on that. Can you guarantee parity if you were to close down, for instance, a police beat that is perhaps in a house? I have one of those in the electorate of Currumbin at Elanora. If you were to close down one of those, can you guarantee that there will be a mobile police beat and that the numbers will stay the same, so we will not lose the capacity for police beats? You are going to have mobile beats that move around, but will we have less in terms of actual houses or actual police beats for each electorate?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I cannot guarantee that and I will give you an example why. The demand shifts dramatically. You will have a police boundary and if you change the boundary the demand shifts. As communities evolve, demand shifts. The district officer and the assistant commissioner need the ability to make decisions around their demand, around their risk profile, around the demographics and around the geography of the place to be able to shift staff where the demand is the greatest. There is extraordinary science around that. We have been working with the Queensland Treasury Corporation just recently to look at demand in each of our divisions. I would say that the way that we are currently staffing is not to demand. I think we need to be very careful about the future, that we use a solid evidence base to put the people where we need them, hence the Service Alignment Program. I need to have the right police in the right place at the right time. In essence, that is what it comes down to.

**Mrs GERBER:** What I am getting out of that, if I can confirm, is that there may not be parity; we may end up with a police beat that is closed in the electorate and we may not have a mobile police beat to service that?

**Commissioner Carroll:** If there is a closure of a beat, we will make sure that there is something else like a mobile beat to service that, but you will have it in those areas where the demand is greatest in those areas. At the moment what you have in some of those suburbs is an officer working shifts where it might not be that busy and they could be used elsewhere. There are 25 police beats, so each district will have one and, in fact, some districts might have two. In essence you are getting more bang for your buck because you will have an agile system rather than someone just sitting in a beat constantly.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, in 2019-20 there were 11,000 domestic violence incidents in Queensland, according to the Queensland courts website. What is the average amount of time that it takes officers to deal with a domestic violence incident, including breaches? Does the QPS have sufficient resources to adequately service those incidents, as well as managing other operational requirements?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I will state the numbers first. Some 18 months to two years ago we had something like 94,000 domestic violence occurrences. Last year that was close to 100,000 and this year it is 106,000. An occurrence includes everything: it includes breaches, it includes actual incidents—you name it. It takes two officers anywhere from half an hour to four or five hours, depending on how complex it is. Yes, I would say that some of our internal processes need to be rectified to make less bureaucracy to get that process a little more efficient into the future. But certainly I do believe, and going back to the work that I talk about of demand and the Service Alignment Program, that if we get that right into the future we would definitely have the resources where we need them to do the job.

The other thing is we should not be walled by boundaries. If an area has a high demand around domestic violence or anything else that we may have, neighbouring areas and divisions should be

backing up and assisting in those areas. Domestic violence is a scourge. Disappointingly, it just keeps increasing and increasing. I have had many discussions with my minister about future processes and systems to improve the process and he has listened to that. Certainly in the new year we aim to take forward the new ideas to make those systems and processes more efficient.

**Mr LAST:** I look forward to it. Commissioner, I refer you again to the strategic review where the Beyond Blue survey identified that Queensland Police have higher rates of mental health issues when compared to the sector as a whole. It also notes that the QPS health and wellbeing model is not meeting needs, with more than double the injury management case loads compared to other jurisdictions. Given the impact that mental health issues are having on our police officers, what are you doing in this space?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Thank you, member, extraordinarily passionate. I was on the national board that was chaired by former prime minister Julia Gillard. In fact, we just had the last part of that report handed down last week with a whole heap of information from across Australia, the first time ever such a study had been carried out—absolutely brilliant. Sadly, it does find that police in particular are more impacted by mental health issues as a result of the work they do over an extended period of time. I have asked within the department to do a review of our injury management, mental health practices and systems. As a result, additional injury management officers are being put on to address their case loads. Also we are funding into the future wellbeing hubs and our processes are completely changing.

In the last 12 months since that report and even the Beyond Blue report, but also our own internal report, an extraordinary amount of work has been done to address the issue. Even in my strategic future priorities, I am very up-front about it. I am very up-front that I will deal with not just the mental health issues but also the physical issues of the organisation. I am extraordinarily passionate about it and I am addressing it in every way possible.

I just want to touch on the fact that mental health deemed legislation was recently introduced for first responders.

**Mr LAST:** Are those wellbeing hubs being funded internally?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes, they have been funded into the 2025 announcements very recently—50 staff for the hubs.

**Mr LAST:** Out of that 2025 number?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes, to the tune of \$9 million.

**Mr LAST:** Is that \$9 million shown as a separate line item in the—

**Deputy Commissioner Smith:** No, it is in the global budget.

**Commissioner Carroll:** It is in the global budget.

**Mr RYAN:** It is part of that \$624 million.

**Mr LAST:** Do we have those attrition figures, Commissioner?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Because of the deputy's handwriting, I will get the deputy to answer it, thank you.

**Mr LAST:** He is a doctor!

**Deputy Commissioner Smith:** I went to Darwin high school. The attrition figures are: in financial year 2014-15, it was 349; in 2015-16, it was 331; in 2016-17, it was 335; in 2017-18, it was 348; in 2018-19, it was 351; and 2019-20, it was 331. Generally, it is around the 350 mark.

With respect to your earlier question, member, with our current maximum capacity at our two police academies, we can train up to 1,100 recruits per annum.

The second part of your question, sir, with respect to what is our plan with the 1,450, the training that we will do has to take into account the growth figures that are funded by Treasury. What we plan on doing in financial year 2021-22 is about 330 for the attrition in that financial year coming up, plus 180. In financial year 2022-23, again it will depend on attrition, so it will be around that 340 mark plus an additional 340, so we will train around that 700 mark. In 2023-24, it will be an additional 440, so we will be training somewhere in the vicinity of 790 recruits. Then in 2024-25, it will be an additional 490, plus around that 330 to 350 and it depends on the attrition. Our capacity of 1,100 will never be maxed out with respect to those attrition figures plus the additional personnel.

**Mr LAST:** I have to say that I have some concerns. If you look across the last five years, with your recruitment numbers it has been around 434. Your attrition figures are around that 350 mark. It is certainly cause for concern, Commissioner. What are you doing to address that attrition rate?

**CHAIR:** Member, if you have a question, ask the question, but please refrain from making speeches.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Sorry, member, can I just ask Doug to—that is in addition to the attrition.

**Deputy Commissioner Smith:** So, 490 in financial year 2024-25 is in addition to whatever the attrition is for that year, and at the moment we are running at about 330. The figures that I have are, for example, in financial year 2015-16, we swore in 623 recruits, but our maximum capacity that we could go to if we had to would be 1,100. That takes into account the available beds, the classrooms and the availability of training staff.

**Mr LAST:** Can I clarify this? We have heard the 2025 number and that equates to 1,450?

**Deputy Commissioner Smith:** Some 1,450 new police officers.

**Mr LAST:** That is over and above your normal target, or is that it going forward?

**Mr RYAN:** They are growth numbers. It is over and above attrition.

**Commissioner Carroll:** It is over and above attrition. We will lose a certain number of people, but these are new numbers. There will be 150 to each region, however, because Brisbane is such a large region, it will have 150 to the two districts; that will be 300. That is minimum. Also in that, it is an additional 50 people to CPIUs around the state, and obviously there is some flexibility in the rest of the numbers.

**Ms BOLTON:** Minister, in response to question on notice No. 2, it states that a remotely piloted aircraft, which I termed 'unmanned aerial vehicle'—we all know as drones—is now stationed at the Sunshine Coast. When will this be deployed within my own community to those hotspots in the suburban areas but also the remote areas that were having difficulties such as Teewah Beach?

**Mr RYAN:** It will be deployed when deemed operationally appropriate by the Queensland Police. They have that resource available to them and they will be deploying it when they need to. I will give you an example of some resources that have been deployed around Teewah Beach relatively recently. It follows on from an announcement that the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner made with me this morning, which is our high-tech cameras. These are world's best cameras. These high-tech cameras are being deployed primarily to address antisocial behaviour on our roads, including people driving dangerously. One of those cameras was deployed—

**CHAIR:** Non-government members, please keep it down.

**Mrs GERBER:** Apologies, Chair.

**Mr RYAN:** The viewers at home just told us what you were talking about, too, which was good. Member for Noosa, that camera has been deployed around your community, to some success. However, when it comes to drones and other key equipment that our police use, they will deploy it when they see operationally fit. I know that they do use them, and they will continue to use them. Certainly the police that are based around Noosa know the proper process to go through to request the availability and use of that equipment.

**Ms BOLTON:** Minister, just a supplementary question to confirm—so they will not be used for monitoring which has been the main issue up there because of a lack of connectivity with mobiles at those times? They are not going to be used for monitoring purely only if it is reported—it will not be an additional or complementary resource utilised in a day-to-day manner?

**Mr RYAN:** I will get the commissioner to add a little to this. My expectation would be that if police detect crime or suspect crime is happening then they will use the resources available to them to identify who the offenders are and make the appropriate arrests. Of course, those resources are used reactively if crime is happening or they are trying to detect crime and make arrests, but also proactively to be in the right place at the right time. Should there be sufficient intelligence to suggest that a certain commission of an offence will happen at a certain time, then it is open to the police to put resources in place to detect that crime at the right time. Commissioner, did you want to add to that?

**Commissioner Carroll:** Thank you, Minister. Spot on. Depending on what the intelligence is and depending on what the offending is and where it is and tactically what the best systems and processes to use are, they may be used in a variety of ways. An example of that is this. Say you know that there will be hooning taking place at a certain location, you would proactively use some of that equipment

ahead of time, and definitely in terms of reaction as well. It really depends on what it is, where it is and what the information is.

**Ms BOLTON:** Commissioner, in response to question on notice No. 3 there is a table of approved permanent positions and a head count. The Sunshine Coast district is the only one in the whole table where that number is fewer than the approved positions. Could I find out why that is so?

**Commissioner Carroll:** The reason it is five fewer would just be vacancies. It is not a decrease in numbers. It is just that the positions are not filled. That is the issue.

**Ms BOLTON:** Every other district has more—and, in some cases, a lot more—than the approved numbers.

**Commissioner Carroll:** It depends what is happening in each district. These can change often, depending on what month it is or what year it is. Certainly, if it is fewer it would be due to vacancies. Sometimes we will have overs. Overs occur if you have two in ones—partners go against one position. It depends how the accounting is done in the background. It would be as a result of vacancies.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I have a question about the operation of COVID-19 hotel quarantine, which I understand QPS is running. The COVID-19 outbreaks from hotel quarantine in Victoria and South Australia have highlighted a pretty significant risk stemming from insecure work. Commissioner, can you indicate how many cleaners or any other hotel staff at Queensland's hotel quarantine hotels and the medihotels are working second or third jobs?

**Commissioner Carroll:** I do not know whether we will be able to get to that level of detail, but I will refer this to Assistant Commissioner Chelepy who has oversight of hotel quarantine. I want to make some opening comments. You are 100 per cent correct. When we look at the areas of highest risk at the moment it is certainly hotel quarantine. Each of the last outbreaks in New South Wales, Victoria and recently in Adelaide are the result of that. We have an extraordinary partnership with the Department of Health. We maintain infection control from when people arrive at the airport right through their time in the hotels until they leave. I know all hotels—all cleaners and people associated with those hotels—go through very strict protocols in terms of what they do there. I do not know whether we could come up with the numbers within the next couple of hours, but I will ask Assistant Commissioner Chelepy to give you some further detail if he can.

**Assistant Commissioner Chelepy:** In response to your question regarding cleaners, I am sorry but we will not be able to provide that. Those cleaners come under the CHO's directives. Whilst the Police Service manages the facilities at quarantine hotels and is responsible for the facilities and security overlay at the hotels, unfortunately the hotel staff are the responsibility of the respective hotels and are subject to the Chief Health Officer's directions and arrangements that are put in place by the Chief Health Officer. Our Queensland Police staff who work at the hotels are primarily rostered to a single hotel and are only moved between hotels in extraordinary circumstances.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I will put a follow-up question to the minister. Given from the responses that we know that hospital staff in particular but also the QPS does not have direct oversight of whether any of those cleaning staff could be working multiple jobs or under labour hire, Minister, do you view it as an acceptable risk that hotel quarantine staff could be working in multiple jobs or under those circumstances given the outbreaks we have seen in other jurisdictions in Australia?

**Mr RYAN:** We have not had the outbreaks here. That is because we have very robust processes. Not only has the CHO been very particular about the processes and frameworks put in place, but we have led the way when it comes to establishing best practice. There is a reason the nation looked to what Queensland was doing. We had highly trained professionals doing the security overlays at the hotels—that is, the Queensland Police Service. It has been a particularly robust security overlay, but that is for good reason. Those strong processes around hotels and the borders have saved lives. They have stopped the spread of COVID and kept the community safe.

I think the results speak for themselves. Obviously, it does require everyone to take this seriously. The role that the Queensland Police Service has taken in ensuring the security overlay is robust has delivered results. I am very grateful that they have taken it very seriously and led the way.

**Mr BERKMAN:** If I could divert very slightly from that line of questioning, I think this is a question for the commissioner. I am curious to know what powers if any Queensland Health or hospital and health service staff have to direct QPS officers on matters and procedures at hotel quarantine hotels and medihotels around things like infection control that clearly fall within QH's expertise?

**Commissioner Carroll:** It is under legislation and the CHO's directives. I will again refer to Shane for the exact details.

**Assistant Commissioner Chelepy:** We operate the hotels under the CHO's directions. All the Queensland Police Service members who are working there are also authorised officers under the Public Health Act as an emergency officer general. We take our authority under the Public Health Act. When we deliver our hotel quarantine services we are there to support Queensland Health in the infection control and clinical control processes. In all those processes Queensland Health are engaged with infection control training. They have contributed to our infection control training packages and our PPE packages for police. Queensland Health provide briefings and instruction to officers on the correct way to use PPE and infection control measures in the way that the hotels operate. I know that they provide that to other agencies and all other people working in those facilities.

**CHAIR:** We will move to government questions.

**Ms BUSH:** With reference to the SDS at page 1-171, which outlines the Queensland Police Service objective to build a safer Queensland, will the minister please advise the committee of works in the pipeline to help police achieve this aim?

**Mr RYAN:** It will be a very exciting few years ahead. The reason is that we have a \$300 million five-year capital works program for the Queensland Police Service to build and improve police facilities right across the state. It is all part of our historic investment in policing, our historic investment to increase the total number of police personnel by 2025.

The \$300 million investment will also play an important role in Queensland's economic recovery by supporting jobs, as well as delivering state-of-the-art police facilities. This is about investing in safety and security. It is also an investment in Queensland's future because it will support hundreds of construction jobs right across the state. That is an investment in jobs for builders, tradies and local suppliers. It is a long list, member. I am glad you are sitting down.

Over the next five years, backdated to 1 July, we will see new facilities or improved facilities rolled out in the following locations: Beaudesert, Biloela, Nambour, West End, West Cairns, Woree, Mackay, Aurukun, Pormpuraaw, Laura, Pimpama, Cooroy, Caloundra South—member for Caloundra—Cunnamulla, Dalby, Warwick, Dayboro, Ripley, major refurbishment at Maryborough, Gin Gin, Rosewood, Clermont—I know the member for Burdekin is excited about that—and Kirwan. Funding has been also been set aside for planning and land acquisition for a future police facility and precinct at Beenleigh.

During the last election campaign we saw a significant commitment to invest in police facilities. This was a commitment that the Labor Party took to the election. It is a commitment which was supported by the people of Queensland and it is a commitment that is going to be delivered.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, I refer to the departmental overview on page 1-171 of the SDS. Will the minister please advise of measures that the Queensland Police Service is taking to contribute to Queensland's economic recovery plan to protect Queenslanders and save lives to unite and recover for Queensland jobs?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you very much, member, for your strong advocacy not only on behalf of your community but also on behalf of policing services right across the state. As I mentioned in my opening statement, our government is investing significant funds in the front line to ensure that the Queensland Police Service is supported and that the Queensland Police Service grows.

The 2020-21 budget for the Queensland Police Service is another record. The capital and operating budget combined is \$2.65 billion. It is a significant boost to policing in Queensland. In fact, it is the biggest boost in three decades. It is entirely fitting because our police work hard for our community. They have worked hard this year during COVID and they have worked hard to keep us all safe.

Part of this commitment will see an extra 2,025 police personnel over the next five years. This is growth numbers. This is over and above attrition. The Police Commissioner, as we heard from her answer just before, has already made a determination about where some of those resources will go. In fact, what we will see is a minimum of an extra 150 police officers over and above attrition—I have to emphasise that—deployed to each and every policing region across the state. In the Brisbane region it will be a minimum 150 to each of the two policing districts.

The delivery of these extra resources has already begun. This commitment is backdated to 1 July. We have already seen recruits graduate from the academy. In fact, it was only last week that I joined Deputy Commissioner Smith and the member for Mundingburra, Les Walker, at the police graduation in Townsville to welcome 45 new police recruits. Those recruits went through the Townsville police academy.

The extra 2,025 police personnel will not only give police an enhanced capability to respond to crime—this picks up on a point that the commissioner made. The commissioner's vision is to focus on proactive prevention and disruption of crime. If you can stop crime before it happens, you create a safer community. This commitment follows on from a request from the commissioner for those additional resources so that she can recalibrate the Police Service to focus on disrupting and preventing crime whilst at the same time ensuring that enhanced capability for response to crime. The government fully supports the commissioner's vision. That is why we have provided this additional resourcing to the Queensland Police Service.

We have heard about the mobile police beats. They are an innovation of the commissioner. They are a very exciting opportunity for the people of Queensland and of course the Police Service.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, I refer to page 1-171 of the SDS which refers to the Queensland Police Service objectives to strengthen its capability to prevent, disrupt, respond and investigate crime and deliver safe and secure communities. Will the minister please advise the committee of actions being taken to protect Queensland's most precious resource—our children?

**Mr RYAN:** Member, I know you are fully aware that we have very strong, tough laws when it comes to child sex offenders here in this state. In fact, they are probably the toughest and strongest in the nation. That is why we brought in the amendments to the Child Protection (Offender Reporting) Act. It enhanced the powers of police to keep additional vigilance when it comes to child sex offenders. We did not just introduce tougher laws; we also backed them in with extra resources. These extra resources—some \$27 million—enhance monitoring and surveillance capability for the police.

It was only a few months ago that the commissioner and I also announced that the Queensland Police Service would be doubling the number of specialist child protection offender register coordinators. I know the commissioner is very committed to that. That commitment will be rolled out over 2021 and will also be supported by extra vehicles for those officers to support their vital work.

The world-famous Task Force Argos—paedophiles in the world shake in their boots when they hear the words 'Task Force Argos'—and also Task Force Orion not only lead the nation but are internationally renowned. The Argos team and Task Force Orion work very hard to track down predators. They have also contributed to saving hundreds of children from harm from around Australia and around the world. I was very pleased as minister that not only did we embed that capability in the Queensland Police Service but we have now made it permanent with permanent ongoing funding which secures those specialists—it is a very specialist area of policing—and ensures that the resourcing is there to support that good work.

Interestingly, over the last four years Task Force Argos officers, through a special operation called Operation Quiet, arrested 168 offenders on almost 600 charges. In that time the Queensland police who work in this area have also helped save 767 children around the world including in Australia. This is through their investigation and specialist analysis of seized data from over 144 million media files. Think about it—Queensland's place in the world. We love Queensland. We think it is the best place in the world and it is. But little Queensland, as part of the world, has contributed to saving 767 kids globally. It is extraordinary. It is because the Queensland Police Service has the specialists. It is also because this government backs the police with those resources.

The police work very hard in this space. They use a range of powers available to them. I would like to take this opportunity to seek leave to table the annual report for the device inspections in accordance with section 808A of the Police Powers and Responsibilities Act. This report contains information about the use of powers by Queensland Police Service officers to inspect digital devices for the Child Protection (Offender Reporting and Offender Prohibition Order) Act 2004 for 2019-20.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, I refer to the SDS highlights on page 1-172 which refer to the ongoing COVID-19 health pandemic. Will the minister please update the committee on the work that frontline police are doing every day to keep Queenslanders safe during the global health crisis?

**Mr RYAN:** It has certainly been an extraordinary year. During this unprecedented public health emergency, the Queensland Police Service has demonstrated once again the depth and breadth of its capability. Police have been at Queensland's front line helping to stop the spread of COVID-19. On the borders they helped crush the curve. Police have been on the borders turning around vehicles, in our airports and in our quarantine hotels.

You do not have to look far to see what happens when you do it wrong. In New South Wales they had the *Ruby Princess* and their aged care debacles; in Victoria it was hotel quarantine. Those missteps

cost lives. There has been none of that in Queensland, and that is in large part due to the dedicated efforts of the Queensland Police Service.

After a marathon 250 days on the borders our police recently dismantled their road checkpoints. It was the end of a job very well done. Police have saved lives in Queensland. They have saved the lives of all of our fellow Queenslanders. The police continue to protect Queenslanders from the pandemic. They supervise people in quarantine hotels and they continue to do random checks on the roads at our borders. In a year of uncertainty Queenslanders can know this: the Queensland Police Service is there for them every day keeping them safe.

I have received many letters and emails from people right across Queensland congratulating the Queensland Police Service on their efforts and thanking our police for keeping them safe. Our police have certainly been on the front line battling the pandemic and their work is enormously appreciated not only by the government but by the people of Queensland. In fact, I would like to note a letter I received from Chris Peters, who is Queensland general manager of operations for the Woolworths Food Group. He said the strong police presence, particularly around their 7 am opening dedicated for elderly, vulnerable and disabled customers during the height of the pandemic, helped keep their team, their customers and visitors calm and safe in those unprecedented times. It was very important for our police to have that presence not only to keep people safe but to ensure that people felt safe, they were calm and they were looked after. Well done to the Queensland Police Service.

**Commissioner Carroll:** There were a couple of questions that I now have answers for, if that is possible?

**CHAIR:** Yes, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Carroll:** The questions were in relation to the number of RPUs that were deployed to COVID duties. Generically speaking, across the state not all RPUs were deployed. When we originally started deploying RPUs they were part of the Road Policing Command; however, as a result of the service alignment program those RPUs were returned to their districts. When they were returned to their districts I am advised that in terms of numbers they were folded up into a district deployment and exactly how many were put to those duties cannot be pulled out at the moment.

**Mr LAST:** What date did that transition from command to district?

**Commissioner Carroll:** That transition occurred in July. To assist the districts we put the RPUs under the districts informally because the structure had not changed, but as the service alignment program moved along as of July they were formally placed in their new structure. We may be able to tease out numbers from the past structure, but I think it would be very difficult under the new structure.

**Mr LAST:** That is okay. I will take the numbers from the old structure.

**Commissioner Carroll:** That may not be in the next half hour or so. I think we will have to go and get some information from the Road Policing Command. I can say that, for each roster from the central command, 19 people were put to COVID duties. There were others in addition to that, but from the central command, as in the new structure, there were definitely 19 people per each roster.

**Mr LAST:** Are we taking that question on notice to provide those numbers?

**Mr RYAN:** I think I can get it to you by the end of today, and if I cannot I will take it on notice.

**Mr LAST:** And the total number of staff in the road policing units across the state as a percentage.

**Commissioner Carroll:** Yes. The other question relates to Taskforce Maxima. Maxima is part of the organised crime gangs group. In that group there are 114 staff, and Maxima makes up 50 of that staff. When COVID commenced and their deployment to COVID commenced on the 1 March this year there were 474 deployments. Deployments might be a number of shifts, so that was purely deployments. However, we changed the way we recorded that, and since 31 August deployments were then put down to shifts. Since that time OCGG had 520 shifts. There are two different ways of counting—purposely so, because we changed the way that we counted. Initially it was deployments from 1 March, and that was 474. That is including the entire group, not just Maxima. Maxima makes up 50 of the 114.

**Mr LAST:** You cannot break it down any further than that?

**Commissioner Carroll:** We will try and do that as well by the end of today, and if we cannot we will get that information to you. We may not be able to, but we will try.

**Mr LAST:** If you can, that would be appreciated.



**Mr RYAN:** Just on that point, I think it is important to highlight the force multiplier that exists within the Queensland Police Service by ensuring that officers were deployed on extra shifts or overtime. This is not necessarily a diminution of business-as-usual policing; it is part of the force multiplier.

**Commissioner Carroll:** We put additional overtime at the end of each shift—not in all places—the reason being is that, if you can put overtime at the end of a shift, you use less staff because you can put them on a two-shift roster as opposed to a three-shift roster. That was done in some areas and not in others depending on what the requirements were, but certainly it is a force multiplier when you can do that.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, I refer to page 1-171 of the SDS which references the police commitment to building a safer Queensland. Will the minister please advise of support being provided by this government to frontline police to help them deliver on this commitment?

**Mr RYAN:** You are going to hear this a lot from me, but this is a record police budget. It is a record police budget which delivers for the Queensland Police Service by boosting personnel and resources. It also supports a number of key initiatives, including a rollout of mobile police beats over the next few years. As I have already mentioned, mobile police beats are an innovation of the Commissioner. They are being introduced as a means of delivering a heightened police presence in local communities. The rollout will see a total of 25 mobile police beats with a minimum of one going to each police district. These mobile police beats will increase the agility of police so that people will see more police out in the community more often.

The Palaszczuk government is also investing in frontline resources, including more QLITE devices for our police. These devices are the cornerstone of modern policing and they characterise our Police Service as being more mobile, agile and more able to respond swiftly in numbers wherever police are needed. The investment in this technology will mean that every frontline officer will get one of the QLITE devices. You have already heard me talk about the additional investment in body worn cameras. Our additional investment will ensure that the total body worn camera fleet moves to one of the biggest in the world. This is very important.

One of the things that the Commissioner and I often hear is that our officers want more frontline police vehicles. Our commitment over the next five years also sees additional police vehicles delivered for the frontline—in fact, 250 extra police vehicles. This is a very important commitment, and it is of course important for the safety of our community to ensure that we continue to invest in the frontline.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, with reference to SDS 1-171 and the departmental overview which outlines the Queensland Police Service's commitment to building a safer Queensland, will the minister please update the committee on actions taken by police to protect the community during protests where people have not only put their own lives at risk but the lives of others nearby?

**Mr RYAN:** This government fully supports the right of Queenslanders to free speech and the right to peacefully protest. However, some of the actions taken by some—only a very few—breach the laws of Queensland and are potentially dangerous. They place people at risk of harm, including themselves, workers at facilities, members of the community, police officers and emergency services personnel who respond to these incidents. It is why we brought in new laws in the interests of safety, and these laws are working, I am very pleased to advise the committee

I am advised in the Brisbane region between 1 July 2019 and 30 October 2020 that 380 individuals were arrested on almost 550 charges for offences including gluing themselves to a roadway, using a dangerous attachment device, using lock-on devices, blocking traffic and assaulting police. More recently, I am advised proceedings were commenced by officers under the dangerous attachment device legislation for an offence which occurred in Brisbane in October. On this particular point, I would like to take the opportunity to seek leave to table a copy of the annual report on dangerous attachment devices for 2019-20.

**CHAIR:** Minister, are there extra copies of the attachment?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted. Please continue, Minister.

**Mr RYAN:** As you will see from the report and as police say, the report demonstrates that the legislation has acted as a deterrent and a preventive measure for those who plan to protest using dangerous attachment devices. Hence, no dangerous attachment devices were seized during the period in question, although police do concede that the impact of the COVID-19 health pandemic may also have played a part with fewer protests occurring during this period. However, in an incident just very recently on 10 December which involved large bamboo poles on the roof of a truck in Brisbane

city, I am advised by police that search powers were used under the new dangerous attachment device laws to stop and search that vehicle and prevent any dangerous attachment device from being used.

**CHAIR:** I call the member for Cooper with maybe the last question in this section.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, I refer to page 1-172 and the service area highlights which make reference to prevention strategies to divert people from serious and organised crime, including outlaw motorcycle gangs. Can you advise of the number of surveillance device warrants issued to police in the last financial year?

**Mr RYAN:** As you have often heard me say, because it is true, Queensland has the strongest, toughest, most comprehensive anti bikie gang legislation in the nation. Last year, the Organised Crime Gangs Group arrested over 1,400 people on more than 4,000 charges. This is the highest number of arrests in any year since Taskforce Maxima was formed. Police themselves say that our laws are the best in the nation and that with the resources the police now have, bikies have nowhere to hide.

Police in the know also say that the number of patched biker gang membership is trending down. Backed by this government's strong laws, police will remain relentless in their pursuit of outlaw motorcycle gang members. That is why we hear reports that these OMCG participants will often ride to the New South Wales border, heading south out of Queensland, and put their colours on at service stations in New South Wales.

Taskforce Maxima is the longest-standing specialist unit in Australia targeting outlaw motorcycle gangs. Under this government, our government, it became a permanent part of the Queensland Police Service as part of the Organised Crime Gangs Group. It includes tactical teams in Brisbane, Coomera, Southport and Logan and major organised crime squads across the state. These teams are dedicated to intelligence protracted investigations, the criminal economy, consorting and gangs. Maxima, as part of the Organised Crime Gangs Group, operates on a collective mix of permanent and seconded positions from the regions and other units within the Queensland Police Service. It merges investigators and intelligence officers with frontline police, building organisational capability. Whilst it is not appropriate to go into the specifics of all the positions, I can say that the establishment of it as a permanent part of the Organised Crime Gangs Group has ensured that results from Maxima and the Organised Crime Gangs Group continue to be successful. Queensland has no clubhouses, no mass bikie gatherings and no national runs.

Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to seek leave to table the annual report of surveillance device warrants. It is very important to appreciate that all members of the Queensland Police Service, but particularly our specialist officers, rely on strong laws and resources to disrupt criminal gang activity, and this includes the use of surveillance devices. It is a very heavily scrutinised resource, which is why an annual report is required. The report shows 56 surveillance device warrants were issued to the Queensland Police Service during 2019-20. These devices are a very valuable tool used by police in the investigation of indictable offences punishable by at least seven years in prison.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can I just clarify that these are extra copies for the committee? This is what you are tabling?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted. Minister, that brings to a conclusion this part of the hearing but could I just clarify a couple of issues in relation to questions that are still outstanding. Is the minister happy to answer those questions, even though we will be in a different portfolio of the minister's responsibility?


**Mr RYAN:** Yes. I will endeavour to answer them by the end of the session, and if I cannot I will take them on notice.

**CHAIR:** Does that mean the end of the final session?

**Mr RYAN:** Yes. The end of the final session.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. The committee will now have a break. The hearing will resume at 3 pm with the examination of the estimates for the corrective services portfolio.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.46 pm to 3.00 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back minister and officials. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Corrective Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you very much, Chair. The safety and security of Queensland's prisons will be further enhanced in the 2020-21 financial year with a range of significant infrastructure investments. The budget allocation for the department reinforces the government's commitment to the safety of Queenslanders and reducing the rate of crime in the community. We are making historic changes to our corrections network of facilities, including continuing the work to have all correctional facilities under public operation. Evidence points to publicly operated corrections facilities delivering superior outcomes, especially in relation to the safety of prison staff and prisoners.

At the end of this financial year the transition will be complete with all Queensland correctional facilities under public operation. In addition, the state budget will continue to deliver modern, sustainable and evidence based corrective services to rehabilitate prisoners and offenders and to reduce recidivism. In 2020-21 more than \$100 million will be spent to begin the construction of Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct stage two. The project is the second largest Queensland government building and construction project after Cross River Rail. Building works will begin early next year. On completion, the \$654 million piece of infrastructure will be world-class. It will be a therapeutic focused prison that will support over 400 jobs during construction. This project will deliver enormous economic benefits to the Lockyer Valley and surrounding regions, creating extra demand for the goods and services provided by local businesses. Once complete, the new facility will support 500 permanent jobs.

The budget is also supporting continued construction work on the \$241 million expansion of Capricornia Correctional Centre. A further \$48 million is allocated this financial year to deliver a project that will result in an extra 398 beds at the centre and more than 200 extra permanent jobs once complete. These infrastructure projects will have economic flow-on effects to the regions for years to come, making a major contribution to Queensland's economic recovery and will deliver significant numbers of new permanent jobs.

Over the past year, there has been substantial growth in the QCS frontline with hundreds of officers joining Queensland Corrective Services on 1 July 2020 as part of the transition of Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre to public operation as well as newly recruited officers for the expanded Capricornia Correctional Centre. It has been an unprecedented year in so many ways, a year of unforeseen challenges. In March 2020 Queensland Corrective Services established the COVID-19 task force and a state corrections operations centre to coordinate agency-wide responses to the pandemic. As at today's date there have been no cases of COVID-19 amongst the prisoner population within Queensland Corrective Services correctional centres.

In the year ahead, the focus for Queensland Corrective Services to keep the community safe will include: improving end-to-end case management in the correctional centre; enhancing training programs for community corrections officers; working closely with high-risk domestic and family violence teams to support victim safety and accountability of perpetrators; continuing work to design and build the health and rehabilitation focus stage two of the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct; continuing the transition of the Southern Queensland Correctional Centre to public operation with a 1 July 2021 cut over date; and contributing to the Queensland Drug and Alcohol Court for evidence based and cost-effective ways of helping people to address the causes of their offending.

In conclusion, I take this opportunity to thank all members of Queensland Corrective Services whether they are in community corrections or custodial operations or the support team behind these hardworking members of Queensland Corrective Services. They are the unsung heroes on the frontline who are keeping our community safe, keeping Queenslanders safe.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. I will hand over to the Deputy Chair.

**Mrs GERBER:** Thank you, Chair. Member for Glass House?

**Mr POWELL:** Thank you Mr Chair and Madam Deputy Chair. My first couple of questions are to the commissioner—welcome, commissioner—and they relate to the performance of Corrective Services against some of the targets as set out in the SDS. Commissioner, in the 2019-20 financial year, serious assaults on officers by prisoners were five times the targeted rate. What was the total amount of staff time lost due to injury and what extra costs were incurred in relation to extra staffing required to cover the hours that staff were unable to work due to injury sustained by these assaults?

**Commissioner Martin:** Member, thank you for the question. You have touched on a really incredibly important issue for me. The issue of safety is paramount in terms of the nature of the business we are in—safety of the prisoners—but particularly the safety of the staffing group of which there now are 5,800 or so. The majority of those staff in Queensland Corrective Services work in a correctional facility from one end of Queensland to the other. The nature of their work is such that they interact with the prisoner cadre. There are workplace injuries in which the prisoner will assault a staff member. There

are instances where, through workplace injuries, the staff member is responding to a particular incident. Therefore, in terms of the nature of the environment, the way that our staff respond, the circumstances of their response in a very difficult, challenging environment, having regard to the inherent nature of the prisoner population is something which we are very concerned about and which we work really tirelessly to address.

In the case to which you refer, over the past 12 months we have been monitoring the issue of assaults and have instigated a use of force review, officer safety review, that has specifically dived into the nature of the assaults on correctional officers. As well as supporting the officers in terms of the nature of the employee assistance program, counselling and support—and of course the work that we expect that occurs locally within a correctional centre to support our officers—at the point of which they are on sick leave or are rehabilitating we support those officers through that process.

In some cases because of the nature of the injuries to our officers, they are absented from the workplace for a considerable period of time. We work with the officer, we work with WorkCover. Our No. 1 focus is to get them back to work as soon as we possibly can. To your other point in terms of what impact is there to the workplace as a result of that officer being away, we supplement the gap in the roster from their absence through a number of mechanisms, not least of which is the fact that when they occupy a critical post within a correctional centre we will find that labour, we will find replacement staff while still supporting the officer but ultimately making sure that there is no diminution to the safety of the prison population.

**Mr POWELL:** Thank you commissioner, but the actual question was about the total amount of staff time lost and costs required to cover that staff time.

**Commissioner Martin:** Yes, indeed. Can we take that on notice, specifically, and we will get back to you with respect to a figure?

**Mr POWELL:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Minister, are you happy to take—

**Mr RYAN:** Same process. If I can get the answer by the end of the day, I will.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr POWELL:** Similarly, Commissioner, given that the proportional percentage of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults since the 2015-16 financial year has not dropped below 7.09 per cent, what steps are being taken to reduce the rate of these attacks to below the 3.4 per cent as per the SDS, and how will this be achieved?

**Commissioner Martin:** That is a very good point. Thank you for raising it. I thank you for the question. The issue of prisoner-on-prisoner assault is symptomatic of a range of things, not least of which is the fact that we have a very difficult and challenging prisoner cadre. Today, 9,447 prisoners are in custody in Queensland. That has increased by 29 per cent since 2015 and about 55 per cent to 60 per cent since 2012. The nature of the prisoner-on-prisoner assault is, as I said, symptomatic of a range of things, not least of which is the challenges in the built environment—the issue of overcrowding, two prisoners sharing a cell, particularly where a prisoner is on a mattress. That is why we have invested very significantly to actually get that prisoner off the floor and into a purpose-built bunk. We have invested very significantly around that. It is a two-stage process designed to retrofit existing cells with a double bunk and also to bring online new capability to build new infrastructure, such as is occurring at Capricornia and at Southern Queensland Correctional Centre.

There is a range of strategies that we are employing locally, though, through use of good intelligence, to determine risk that might exist between one prisoner and another prisoner. There is a complete review of intelligence currently, designed to get better outcomes with respect to being preventive and proactive in terms of identifying the risk profile that inherently exists within the prisoner population. They are just some of the things we are currently doing and investing in.

The events of this year with respect to COVID-19 have made for a less than typical year, having regard for the things we have had to do and to work with the prisoner population particularly around locking down prisons when we experienced a great degree of threat, particularly around prisoner-to-staff or staff-to-prisoner transmission of COVID-19. We are seeing some of that reflected in the current figures for 2019-20.

**Mr POWELL:** You made reference to the fact that a number of cells have required doubling up. How many of the existing Queensland prisons would be regarded as overcrowded, using that measure?

**Commissioner Martin:** The majority of Queensland prisons currently are overcrowded, having regard for the amount of capacity that came online at the point at which they were built. Since then we have embarked on a two-stage process to retrofit cells that were originally designed for one person to be purpose built for now two bunks. Cells that are being built into the future and the capacity we have been able to bring to bear at Capricornia and at Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct, when it is built at the end of 2023, will be very sensitive to the issue of, in some cases—

**Mr POWELL:** But at present, how many prisons would be overcrowded?

**Commissioner Martin:** There are 11 high-security facilities in the state. I can give you that specifically. It would be all but one or two of those, but I could be more precise should you wish.

**Mr POWELL:** If you are able to get the numbers in terms of how many correctional facilities are overcrowded and by how many, that would be most useful, thank you.

**Commissioner Martin:** We have that information. We will be able to get it to you distilled so as to not waste time, should the minister be supportive of that.

**CHAIR:** Is the minister happy to—

**Mr RYAN:** We will see if we can come back.

**Mr POWELL:** I have just one more question on the targets. Commissioner, in the 2019-20 financial year, escapes from low-security facilities were almost triple the target. Despite that, the same target has been set for the 2020-21 financial year, according to page 1-148 of the SDS. Given the increase in the number of escapes, how do you intend to address this issue and do you need more resources to do so?

**Commissioner Martin:** If you look at the statistical year 2019-20, there were 10 escapes or absconds from low-custody facilities in Queensland. In the current year to date—bear in mind, we are talking here about up to 14 December, so we have had nearly a six-month period—there have been two only. That is still two too many, but last year was an aberration. The work we have done this year has been really designed to make sure that the right people have been relinquished to low custody. The work of the staff to be vigilant around risk and the use of our intelligence I believe will work very effectively for us to make sure we are managing that risk. Just to reiterate, in 2019-20 there were 10; in the year to date currently there are two. The strategies we have in place are reasonably effective. As for the second limb of your question—the resources—I am confident that we will be able to use the resources we have to good effect to make sure we are meeting our obligations in terms of escape or abscond from low custody.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, with reference to page 1-154, what was the total financial cost of repairing the damage from the September riots at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre, where prisoners smashed windows, flooded cells and lit fires?

**Commissioner Martin:** I thank the member for the question. In short, because of the work that we had done in the lead-up to 1 July, when we had taken Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre into government control, and the remediation work that was occurring from 1 July to the time of the riots that were some months later, it is almost impossible to put a dollar figure on that. I can tell you the extent of the damage. I can tell you the number of windows. I can tell you the proportion of the cells—

**Mr LAST:** Please do.

**Commissioner Martin:** I will be very happy to do that. In August 2020 a small outbreak of COVID-19 occurred at the QCS Academy, leading to three academy officers and two Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre officers contracting the virus. That led to the shutdown and it led to the subsequent riots, as you are rightly aware. The circumstances of the locking down of the prison for a protracted period of time led to the major violent demonstrations being perpetrated by prisoners whilst locked down. There was a significant response to that. As a result of that, there was damage to several cells and damage to units. Pleasingly, there were no lives lost, and no serious injuries to officers or prisoners were sustained. There was significant damage requiring assessment and remediation by our infrastructure asset services and major capital works command while working with QBuild at the site. On 9 September 2020 the following was determined by that command. Some 170 cells, or 19 per cent of the capability at that stage, received some form of damage, from very minor to more severe.

**Mr LAST:** Did you say 90 per cent?

**Commissioner Martin:** Nineteen. Some 170 cells, or 19 per cent, sustained some form of damage, with 28 cells, or three per cent, deemed unserviceable for a period of time, meaning they could not be occupied at that time. A total of 92 cells, or 10.3 per cent, sustained broken external windows

and 95 cells, or 10.7 per cent, had broken cell door viewing windows. A total of 44 cells, or 4.9 per cent, sustained electrical damage and 11 cells, 1.2 per cent, were fire damaged. That was the totality of the damage. The reality is that, because we were remediating the site, many of the windows and doors—the things that needed to be replaced—were already earmarked for remediation or rectification as a result of the site that we had inherited when the site migrated to government control on 1 July. I can tell you what that totals—I cannot tell you here and now—but the reality is that, regrettably, I cannot tell you what was caused specifically as a result of the damage that occurred back at that time.

**Mr RYAN:** Just on the previous question about built bed capacity at the prisons, question on notice 567 was tabled on 16 June. I know that is a little bit out of date, so I have just done the analysis. Of course, there are many measures for determining capacity, but if you look at the number of beds and the number of prisoners then there are four centres out of the 12 that have more prisoners than beds. That would mean that some prisoners would be sleeping on the floor in a cell. Eight of the 12 prisons have more beds than prisoners, as at 14 December.

**Mrs GERBER:** My question is to the commissioner. It centres around TV and entertainment units for inmates. It is just a basic, straightforward question. How much on average does it cost for your department to source and replace TVs used by inmates—just the cost?

**Commissioner Martin:** I have that at my disposal here, so just bear with me for one moment and I will have that for you. In 2019-20 there were 2,422 televisions that were replaced for various reasons costing a total of \$508,620, excluding GST. This was funded though from an allocation that comes from revenue from the prisoners who pay \$2 per week which is the rental cost associated with the TVs. In terms of the revenue stream from the TVs that we get, which is \$819,000, a proportion of that replaced the 2,422 TVs that were damaged.

**Mrs GERBER:** Sorry, but can you just clarify for me: how much of that—

**Commissioner Martin:** Some \$508,000.

**Mrs GERBER:** Of that \$508,000, how much of that was revenue from prison contributions—can you break that down for me—and how much was department cost?

**Commissioner Martin:** Sure.

**Mr RYAN:** All of it. We made a profit.

**Commissioner Martin:** All of it, so \$508,622—

**Mr RYAN:** Paid for by prisoners, not taxpayers.

**Commissioner Martin:**—was paid for by prisoners from the \$2 per week that we charge prisoners for the use of a TV. That—

**Mrs GERBER:** Sorry; finish your answer.

**Commissioner Martin:** I was just going to say that it is an important mechanism as part of the incentive and earned privileges that a prisoner earns the privilege to have a TV. The prisoner must care for the TV and the prisoner must pay for the TV.

**Mrs GERBER:** And are PlayStations included in that?

**Commissioner Martin:** I do not know of PlayStations being issued in a correctional facility in Queensland.

**Mrs GERBER:** Can you say how many PlayStations or similar devices are issued to inmates in the—

**Commissioner Martin:** I am sorry, but I think I already answered that question.

**CHAIR:** Just hang on a second. Sorry, Commissioner; keep going.

**Commissioner Martin:** Chair, thank you. Member, as a general rule, I am not aware of a PlayStation being issued in a high-security facility in a correctional centre in Queensland. If they are, I am not aware of it and it is not part of the normal suite of deliverables, at least to my mind.

**Mr RYAN:** Member, I am just seeking clarity: are you referring to youth detention centres, because that does not come under the jurisdiction of me or the commissioner?

**Mrs GERBER:** I would be referring to both, to be honest, but at this stage it is just—

**Mr RYAN:** Neither of us are aware.

**Mrs GERBER:** I am referring to the normal prisons. So of the 14 prisons that you listed out, I want to know whether PlayStations are issued as part of the TV and entertainment units that prisoners are allowed.

**Commissioner Martin:** Member, thank you for the question, but I have never seen one and I am not aware of that as a general part of the operational equipment in a prison.

**Mr RYAN:** The other thing to point out as well, Commissioner, is that those televisions may not necessarily be damaged as a result of a wilful act of the prisoner. It could be an accident.

**Commissioner Martin:** That is right.

**Mr RYAN:** Someone could have dropped it, and it would be very difficult to quantify how many would be a wilful act of damage and how many would be accidents.

**Commissioner Martin:** That is right, yes.

**Mr RYAN:** Or just aged.

**Commissioner Martin:** Quite so.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, my question relates to page 148 of SDS volume 1 relating to the recommendations from the Crime and Corruption Commission's Taskforce Flaxton. In response to the question on notice it stated that all 33 recommendations from the task force were underway. Commissioner, how many of the 33 have been completely implemented and how many are still a work in progress?

**Commissioner Martin:** Thank you. You would be aware of course that Taskforce Flaxton was a multifaceted, multidimensional report dealing with a range of corruption related risks, including the issue of overcrowding, and there is a range of work that we have been doing around that and a whole range of other things. Some of those recommendations we were able to deliver in the short term. Some of those are a work in progress. You could well imagine that the issue of overcrowding is not delivered today, it is not delivered next week but it will be delivered when the southern Queensland correctional precinct comes online at the end of 2023. The reality is that all of those recommendations have either been delivered or are currently works in progress.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, can you specifically state by recommendation number which of those recommendations are still in progress? I am happy for you to take it on notice.

**Commissioner Martin:** We have a detailed schedule of each and every one of the recommendations arising from the CCC's important work with Flaxton. Where they have been delivered and where they are works in progress are currently matters for which we have a detailed schedule, but I also raise the issue that this is a matter that ultimately will go to CBRC. Having regard for the Flaxton recommendations in the Flaxton report and the deliverables from that, they are matters pursuant to the Cabinet Budget Review Committee, so I would have to take that on notice, I am sorry.

**CHAIR:** Minister, if I picked up on what the commissioner was saying, that would not be information that is available to the committee because it is going to the CBRC? Is my understanding correct?

**Mr RYAN:** I am not going to get into CBRC matters.

**CHAIR:** No, but the commissioner said that they would be matters that would go to the CBRC and as such therefore not be available to the committee.

**Mr RYAN:** That is obvious from the Flaxton report. If you were to read the Flaxton report, you would see that there are some matters which would require consideration by other groups and entities.

**Mr LAST:** Mr Chair, I then seek this clarification from the commissioner. You referred to the schedule and where those recommendations are at. I would be happy if you were to say, for example, that recommendation 13 has been referred to the CBRC for consideration. I am happy to have that in those broad terms. I am just seeking an indication of which recommendations are still in progress by number.

**Commissioner Martin:** Notwithstanding the expectation of the department that may very well have to report at a future time to another committee under a CBRC arrangement, I would probably need to take that on notice and consider our position with respect to that.

**Mr RYAN:** To put it into context, I am happy to answer it because there was a question on notice—that is, No. 24 dated 4 February 2020—which sets out the status of implementation of the recommendations.

**Mr LAST:** But there would be significant changes, you would expect, between February and December?

**Mr RYAN:** They are all being implemented and they give you time lines. It actually says that recommendations 27B and 7B are scheduled for implementation by June 2021 and September 2021 respectively. That is just an example. Just have a look at that question on notice.

**Mr LAST:** So can we get an update of that?

**Mr RYAN:** It is on the parliament website.

**Mr POWELL:** That is from February.

**Mr LAST:** Yes, from February. Can we get an update as of today?

**Mr RYAN:** No, because it actually says the implementation times. It actually says June 2021. It is not June 2021 yet.

**Mr POWELL:** Have the implementation dates slipped?

**Mr LAST:** For all the recommendations?

**Mr RYAN:** They are all in progress. Commissioner, did you—

**Mr LAST:** Yes, but what I want to know is which ones have been completed and which ones are still in progress by recommendation?

**Mr RYAN:** It is set out in the QoN.

**Mr LAST:** No.

**Mr RYAN:** Yes; I am reading it.

**Mr POWELL:** They may well have, Minister, but those time frames may also have slipped, so we are seeking an update.

**Commissioner Martin:** Chair and member, thank you for the question. If you are asking me to go back to question on notice No. 24 to verify that the information in here is still contemporary and accurate with respect to the time frames that were prescribed in here on 4 February, I am happy to do that and I am happy to come back to you.

**Mr LAST:** Will you come back to this committee today or will that be a question on notice?

**CHAIR:** The minister is the one who has to—

**Mr RYAN:** I do not want to be a broken record, but if I can answer it by the end of the day I will.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you.

**Mr RYAN:** I can say that there are definitely no PlayStations in prisons, so no Super Mario Bros. or Nintendo; definitely no.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, I refer to page 148 of volume 1 of the SDS relating to the Sofronoff Queensland parole system review which is dated 1 December 2016, more than four years ago. Commissioner, again, how many of the 89 recommendations contained within that report have been completely implemented and how many are still a work in progress?

**Commissioner Martin:** Thank you indeed. You would be aware that of the 91 recommendations 89 were accepted by the government at the point at which Mr Sofronoff handed down his review in December 2016. What I can tell you is that 49 of the 89 recommendations that were accepted by government have been completely and fulsomely implemented—49 of the 89. The remainder are works in progress having regard to the complexity and the sophistication of them and some of the ones that this relates to, such as the standing up of the Parole Board Queensland, are one of the line items and one of the key recommendations of that important work.

**Mr LAST:** Can I get a list of those that are still in progress?

**Commissioner Martin:** I would be happy to do that. I am happy to talk to that now. It is a voluminous list, having regard for the fact that there are 89. Should you wish me to do that, I am happy to do that.

**Mr LAST:** You said 49 have been implemented?

**Commissioner Martin:** Forty-nine have been implemented fully.

**Mr LAST:** So I want to know the remainder that have not yet been implemented.

**Commissioner Martin:** I will give you that.



**Mr RYAN:** Commissioner, before you do that, bear in mind some will take many, many years to deliver.

**Mr LAST:** That is okay. I just want to know which recommendations are still to be implemented.

**Commissioner Martin:** I will tell you which of those are still in progress. This is where we have committed to but we have yet to deliver: recommendation 1, recommendation 3, recommendations 5, 8, 12, 14, recommendations 15, 16, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 30 through 32, 39, 48, 53, 56, 59, 62, 63 and 64, 66 through 75, 81, 84, 88 through 91. The 49 have been implemented.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you. Could you outline how many general manager positions in the prisons in Queensland are currently vacant and how long they have been vacant?

**Commissioner Martin:** There are four positions currently at general manager level that have been vacant. The longest of those I believe goes back to the beginning of this year. There is a process underway currently, a merit based selection process, not only fill to the current vacancies; I am confident that in coming weeks we will be able to permanently allocate the vacancies that exist across the state.

**Mr LAST:** For all four positions?

**Commissioner Martin:** For all four positions, that's right.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, is the QCS getting the proper funding and support from government it needs to implement the recommendations from the two task forces that I have talked about today, Flaxton and the Sofronoff parole review?

**Commissioner Martin:** Mr Last, thank you for the question. We have received significant funding due to the Sofronoff review, \$265 million over five years, and we are doing incredibly good work with that funding having regard for the nature of the complexity that we deal with. With a budget of \$1.2 billion, with a significant issue of overcrowding, with the investments that government have made, we are using that to good effect to get the best outcome that we possibly can for the 9,447 prisoners and the over 18,000 people that we manage in the community as part of community corrections. There is no government that would say it gets as much resources as it would want, but the reality is that we are a very lean organisation doing really good work with the resources we get and the investments that have been made recently by government. Particularly around my No. 1 operational priority, which is to address fundamentally the issue of overcrowding, I am satisfied that we are using that to good effect. Thank you.

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the commissioner. You mentioned before the Queensland Parole System Review, and you did say there were 91 recommendations originally. What were the two that were not supported?

**Commissioner Martin:** One of those recommendations was a recommendation that sex offenders and people who had been sentenced to manslaughter, homicide—murder related offences—should be relinquished to low custody. That was not accepted by government. The other recommendation was recommendation 7, which was not supported, where a sentence is to be imposed for an offence that presently carries a mandatory non-parole period, the sentencing judge should have the discretion to depart from the mandatory period. That recommendation was not supported. There were only two of the 91 not supported by government.

**Ms BOLTON:** In relation to low-risk inmates presently, are personal tracking devices—any of the innovations coming through—being utilised to transition those inmates out earlier to free up space in our prisons?

**Commissioner Martin:** The use of GPS tracking is generally not used within the context of people who are currently in a prison, either low custody or secure custody facilities in Queensland. Having said that, where we do use GPS tracking incredibly effectively is to get really good outcomes with what is called DP(SO)A offenders being managed in the community. These are offenders who have a history of sexual predation, sexual offending, and these are the people, because of community safety, we do, upon an order of the Supreme Court, fit with GPS tracking. We monitor those particular people to ensure community safety.

Because of the pronouncements of various courts and the Parole Board, the application of GPS tracking on particular people is being managed in the community as part of community corrections. Bearing in mind there are 18,000-plus people being managed in the community currently in Queensland and GPS technology has proven to be, over the last five-plus years, a very, very good weapon—not the knockout blow, but it is certainly part of a suite of arrangements we have in place—there is excellent work being done by community corrections to monitor and manage these people and to deal with the

underlying issues of their behaviour and to get better outcomes in terms of success. Thank you for the question.

**Mrs GERBER:** I am sorry to go back to the issue of PlayStations, but out of an abundance of caution and for the sake of clarity, that includes low-security prisons, does it not?

**Commissioner Martin:** Let me reiterate my position. I was talking here about prisons generally in Queensland and I made mention of the fact that I certainly do not know of any PlayStation being issued in a secure facility in Queensland and, equally, I do not know of any low-custody centre being issued with a PlayStation in Queensland. But, of course, the minister's point about youth justice I do not know because that is not part of my portfolio responsibilities.

**Ms BUSH:** I refer the minister to page 13 of budget paper 3. Would the minister please provide an update on the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct stage 2, including the major benefits and jobs created by this investment in regional Queensland?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, member, for the question. This government is committed to ensuring community safety through the delivery of safe and humane correctional services. What is better is that we can do this while we are also addressing the issue of capacity constraints in our high-security correctional centres which have wideranging impacts on the criminal justice system. As the second largest infrastructure project by the Queensland government after Cross River Rail, this new centre will create over 400 jobs per annum during construction, rising to almost 900 jobs at peak times, with hundreds of permanent jobs once the centre is operational. In addition to the direct jobs this project will create, the new centre will give a significant boost for the local economy in the Lockyer Valley and surrounding regions. Indeed, the mayor of Lockyer Valley Regional Council, Tanya Milligan, a good friend of Queensland Corrective Services, told the *Queensland Times* that the new prison would equal jobs and opportunity and would work as a catalyst for more investment in the Lockyer Valley. The commissioner and I look forward to catching up with the mayor again when we head out to do a sod turn at the correctional centre site in the near future.

It is important to recognise that this will be a state-of-the-art centre and it will be the first for our state to be purpose built with a therapeutic operating model in mind. The facility will support safer communities through this therapeutic operating model that includes enhanced mental health and drug and alcohol rehabilitation services with a focus on addressing the ice epidemic and its links to violence and property crime.

Design works are well underway across a number of government departments, with subject matter experts each working to ensure the centre meets the highest standards of safety and security whilst providing for this therapeutic operating model to ensure that those prisoners with the most complex behaviour needs are accommodated. This new infrastructure will support the operation of end-to-end case management which is an important reform arising out of the Queensland Parole System Review, as well as re-entry services supported through the provision of enhanced programs and interview spaces, video conferencing technology and integrated healthcare services. The total capital budget for this project is almost \$654 million. This facility will deliver approximately a thousand new high-security beds for male prisoners.

On 12 August 2020 I announced publicly that John Holland had been named the managing contractor. Early works are due to start in the next few months, with major construction starting in early 2021. This year's budget allocation, from the \$654 million, is \$110 million and that will ensure construction kicks off in a very big way in the Lockyer Valley. The centre is due to be completed in late 2023, so it is a very fast build. We are very excited about this project and are looking forward to the capacity coming online and, in particular, those specialist services to help address the underlying aspects that may be contributing to a person's engagement in the criminal justice system.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to page 147 of the SDS, which identifies one of QCS's strategic objectives as a safer correctional environment, will the minister provide an update on the strategies being implemented to enhance the safety of Corrective Services officers?

**Mr RYAN:** Member, who would have thought that you would be on that side of the table asking those questions? I pay tribute to your service as a custodial officer within Queensland Corrective Services. Yours was a very distinguished career and one that I know was full of passion for the safety of your colleagues and for ensuring that there was additional investment in the front line. I know that as a part of this government you are very proud of the government's commitment, but I also know that you will continue to fight for your colleagues in Queensland Corrective Services. Of course, the government will continue to listen and continue to act.

The safety and security of each and every Corrective Services officer is the No. 1 priority for Queensland Corrective Services. Queensland Corrective Services officers work in a highly dynamic and complex environment. The agency is committed to implementing measures to increase safety and address violence. Every officer deserves to go home safely at the end of their shift. That is why, in his first 100 days as the commissioner, the commissioner announced a full review of every aspect of officer safety to ensure that Queensland Corrective Services becomes the best trained and best equipped correctional agency in Australasia. As the member would be aware, we are well on our way there, particularly with the rollout of gas in recent times and the associated training. The review engaged with representatives from other jurisdictions and colleagues from within Queensland Corrective Services and the Queensland Police Service to consult on policies, procedures, practice technology and equipment that go to the heart of safety. The officer safety use of force review contained 21 findings and recommendations, all of which were supported.

The implementation of the review's recommendations will bring about changes, including new tactical options and skills training, with a stronger focus on communication skills and de-escalation techniques; training for all officers within correctional centres and community corrections officers appropriate to the role and level of contact with prisoners and/or offenders; increased tactical options with skills training; a new statewide incident management system; training in the deployment of OC spray or gel for all custodial correctional officers and correctional supervisors; and robust governance measures, including the establishment of the officer safety committee. The review also highlighted the need to provide all officers with enhanced training in communication and de-escalation techniques.

The QCS has stepped in early with enhancements to officer safety, which is, of course, strongly supported by the government, including expanding the use of body worn cameras, ensuring tactical options and skills procedures aimed at communication and de-escalation are put in place, evidence based best practice for managing prisoners with mental health issues, the Queensland Police Service 'communicating with influence' program has been incorporated into the mandatory training, and safety engagement strategies to manage difficult prisoners.

Member, I commend your colleagues and, particularly, the Together Union which was engaged as part of the officer safety use of force review. I look forward to continuing to position Queensland Corrective Services as the best trained and best resourced agency in Australasia, because ultimately it will deliver safer conditions.

**Ms BUSH:** With reference to page 148 of volume 1 of the SDS, which identifies continuing to safely manage a growing prisoner population as a key challenge, will the minister provide advice on how that challenge is being met?

**Mr RYAN:** Obviously, capacity constraints are not unique to Queensland. It is a challenge facing jurisdictions around Australia and, in fact, around the world. Of course, it is associated with the impact of processes and laws in the criminal justice system and also the impact around investing in rehabilitation and reducing recidivism—all things that obviously we are endeavouring and undertaking here in Queensland.

Looking back at the 2019-20 year, Queensland Corrective Services has done quite a few things around expanding capacity. The first is developing the program around delivering the 1,000-bed therapeutic focused correctional facility stage 2 at the Southern Queensland Correctional Precinct; continuing the expansion of the Capricornia Correctional Centre—that project is due to be finished next year; varying levels of commissioning will take place in the lead-up to construction finally finishing next year; and rolling out the second tranche of 1,000 bunk beds, bringing the total to 2,000 bunk beds. That is due to be finished probably sometime next year, as well. That will bring the total number of extra beds brought online by the Palaszczuk government to 4,000, which is a significant investment. There will be 4,000 extra beds once those projects are complete. Of course, that is on top of the Borallon Training and Correctional Centre being brought online in the past two years.

Queensland Corrective Services is also working to reduce further prisoner numbers by increasing rehabilitation opportunities for prisoners to address key underlying causes of offending and recidivism, such as substance abuse, before they are released. Queensland Corrective Services is making significant progress to improve end-to-end case management in the correctional system, with the first case management unit being rolled out at Townsville Correctional Centre. That is a very important project and something that we are very excited about. It brings custodial operations closer to community corrections as well, to ensure that the transition from custody into the community is enhanced. By enhancing that transition we enhance community safety.

We are continuing to enhance training programs for front-line community corrections officers in partnership with Griffith University. We are continuing to expand rehabilitation programs in correctional centres and community corrections, including alcohol and other drug programs and services, in many regions across the state. Of course, we are investing in more post-release supported accommodation services for parolees in a number of locations across the state. Other measures being implemented to ease prisoner population pressures include contracting bail support programs as well as re-entry services to aid the transition of prisoners back into the community to reduce their likelihood of reoffending and returning to custody. That is a very important investment in community safety and, of course, the government is pleased to support it.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, with reference to page 147 of the SDS, which identifies one of QCS's strategic objectives as safer correctional environments, I note that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all operations. Can you please provide an update on how the risk of COVID-19 in Queensland correctional facilities was and is being addressed?

**Mr RYAN:** Queenslanders have to be very proud of what Queensland Corrective Services has done during COVID-19. It is exceptional work. I will outline some of the key successes during this year of Queensland Corrective Services in respect of COVID-19.

The government broadly—and I pay tribute to the people of Queensland—have been particularly focused on ensuring COVID-19 is contained and presents a minimal risk to community safety and people's health in Queensland. Whilst COVID-19 around the world continues to impact day-to-day life, we are now in a position in Queensland where our economy can reopen and people, to the best possible extent, can get back to their normal day-to-day lives. That did not happen by chance. Certainly Queensland Corrective Services played a big role in ensuring that the impact of COVID-19 was not felt significantly in correctional centres.

Whilst Queensland Corrective Services continues to maintain the business continuity, the security of our correctional centres, the safety of our officers and the wellbeing of prisoners and visitors in our correctional centres—and there was a small number of incidents of staff infection that came from outside the centres—through the extraordinary work of every officer in Queensland Corrective Services, Queensland Corrective Services successfully kept the prisoner population free of COVID-19. That is extraordinary when you look around the world.

That is extraordinary when you look around the world and see how COVID-19 found its way into prisons. Particularly when you consider the dynamic nature of people coming and going from the criminal justice system, being put into watch houses on bail and moved into correctional centres, the effort is truly remarkable. I would like to pay tribute to everyone in Queensland Corrective Services and Queensland Health for their commitment to ensuring that our prisoner population kept free of COVID-19.

Like all other frontline public safety agencies, the pandemic has brought about unique challenges for Queensland Corrective Services. The risk of COVID-19 was very real and the stakes were even higher. The evidence from overseas is that the correctional environment presents an elevated risk should COVID-19 infection happen in a correctional facility. Queensland Corrective Services worked diligently with Queensland Health to ensure that operations during the pandemic reflected the best clinical advice of the Chief Health Officer.

Underpinned by the Chief Health Officer's public health emergency declaration, the commissioner held powers to authorise extraordinary measures in response to the threat of COVID-19. In practical effect this means that with the best advice from the Chief Health Officer, the commissioner is empowered to implement a range of restrictions from visitor exclusions through to complete lockdowns of correctional facilities if the health advice supports that course of action. The QCS hotspot response planning tool also outlines four stages of restrictions in correctional centres and community corrections offices, according to the local level of risk of community transmission based on Queensland Health advice. All new reception prisoners were required to undergo health checks and, if determined by Queensland Health, placed in isolation and monitored for symptoms. Staff and visitors also underwent temperature checks upon entry into all correctional centres and the academy.

I am pleased to advise that across Queensland our correctional facilities and community corrections remain at stage 1 restrictions, the lowest restrictions that focus on good hygiene, infection control and social distancing. The hotspot response planning and Queensland Corrective Services policies are tried and tested. Through the very worst of the pandemic and the Queensland Corrective Services Academy and Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre cluster, the hotspot planning methodology demonstrated the ability of Queensland Corrective Services to respond quickly and effectively to

outbreaks whenever they occur in the community. This is work at the forefront of public safety and this is about the lives of staff, prisoners and the whole community.

**Commissioner Martin:** Mr Chair, if it pleases you, I would like to raise a qualifying issue with respect to the member for Currumbin's questions around PlayStations in correctional facilities, if I can.

**CHAIR:** Of course, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Martin:** I was talking with respect to the publicly owned and publicly operated prisons in Queensland, and we have canvassed this very issue with Southern Queensland Correctional Centre, which is a privately run prison. It is a women's prison. We have been able to find that they have one Nintendo Wii that is used by the advanced care unit specifically for a therapeutic purpose with people with mobility challenges in the mobility space. That is the only device that we have knowledge of as a department. For the issue of completeness, I wanted to be perfectly accurate on that point. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Commissioner.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, with reference to page 147 of volume 1 of the SDS which identifies harnessing new technology to drive efficiency, would the minister please provide an update on emerging technologies being investigated and how these new technologies might assist in the delivery of safe and effective corrective services?

**Mr RYAN:** Queensland Corrective Services, like so many other agencies in the Queensland government, is committed to innovation, the Advance Queensland strategy around creating the jobs of the future, and ensuring that Queensland continues to invest in those new industries, those new opportunities which will, of course, secure a brighter future for Queensland. Queensland Corrective Services is committed to providing world-class correctional services to enhance community safety and aid in the rehabilitation of prisoners and offenders. This is why Queensland Corrective Services continues to explore cutting-edge technologies in our correctional facilities. It is about using technology to maximise efficiencies to enable our hardworking correctional officers to do what they do best, which is managing and rehabilitating offenders and keeping our community safe.

Queensland Corrective Services has a dedicated unit tasked with investigating emerging technologies and how they may be used to address the strategic priorities and principles of the overarching Corrections 2030 and the Queensland Corrective Services Strategic Plan 2020-2024. The innovation integration group are right now exploring four key technologies: in-cell technology, wastewater drug technology, drone detection and body scanning.

The in-cell technology project will enable prisoners to access education, training and rehabilitation services and products. This means prisoners can spend more time on meaningful activity while confined in their cells at night-time. The cost of this service will be met through the prisoner revenue stream and will cost absolutely nothing to Queensland taxpayers. This will mean substantially less paperwork and administrative duties for our hardworking officers as well.

Another new technology, the wastewater drug testing, is an internationally recognised population based technique which allows for detection of a range of illicit and licit drugs. This will allow Queensland Corrective Services to further enhance its intelligence capabilities by monitoring levels of illicit drugs which may be entering facilities and target operations accordingly.

In 2018, Queensland Corrective Services started a trial of drone detection technology. Phase 2 will now evaluate whether current generation technology is sufficiently advanced to combat the increasing threat of drones to Queensland facilities. It is yet another way Queensland Corrective Services is engaging in cutting-edge technology to intercept the introduction of contraband which threatens the safety of our centres.

Finally, Queensland Corrective Services has engaged screen technology solutions—body scanning—to investigate the use of non-invasive screening technology such as millimetre wave and low-dose X-ray to detect contraband concealed under clothing and within body cavities as an alternate to searches requiring the removal of clothing. The implementation of such technology would be somewhat of a game-changer in reducing the flow of contraband into Queensland correctional facilities. This means safer prisons for officers and prisoners, more opportunities for rehabilitation and ultimately safer communities.

Can I just say as well, when you hear stories like that about the innovation, where we encourage our officers and agencies to think outside the box, to identify a problem and then work around ways to solve that problem, to ultimately create a better prison environment, better outcomes for prisoners, a

safer environment, you have to give Queensland Corrective Services due credit for that. It is exceptional work and we look forward to the outcomes of those trials of those new technologies.

**CHAIR:** We are coming to the end of this particular session, minister.

**Mr RYAN:** There were two questions, I understand. The first one was about data relating to workplace incidents and officer welfare. That data is held by WorkCover, so we will endeavour to get that information and come back because ultimately—

**Mr LAST:** If you can.

**Mr RYAN:** If I can, I will. If not, I will put it on notice. We will endeavour to get that information from WorkCover because ultimately it is around a worker's compensation claim—how long people have been off. I am assured by the commissioner that we will have it by the end of the day.

**Commissioner Martin:** We will do our best to have that by the end of the day, but the reality is that given the lateness of the day, the information is held by WorkCover and is dependent upon another agency giving us that information.

**Mr RYAN:** The other one was about Taskforce Flaxton and the recommendations. We will verify that that question on notice has not had any updates. If I can come back before the end of the day, I will, otherwise I will take it on notice.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.


**Mr RYAN:** Given I have a couple of minutes, I do have the opportunity to answer those questions that were outstanding from the police session. The first one related to the Organised Crime Gangs Group, which includes Taskforce Maxima. I am advised by the Commissioner that of the 474 deployments—bearing in mind that that could be only one shift; it is not necessarily unique officers—to COVID-19 since 1 March this year for the Current Organised Crime Gangs Group, 208 can be attributed pro rata to Taskforce Maxima in Brisbane, Taskforce Maxima in Coomera and Taskforce Maxima Road Policing Command. The length of the deployments may vary in length. As the commissioner said, it could be one shift; it could be multiple shifts. Since 31 August 2020, I am advised by the commissioner the deployments can be broken down into shifts. Of the 520 COVID-19 shifts for the Organised Crime Gangs Group, of which Taskforce Maxima is part, 228 can be attributed pro rata to the Taskforce Maxima unit.

In respect of Road Policing Command officers, bearing in mind that there has been a restructure and it is difficult once people are deployed back to their regions to get a specific number, I am advised by the commissioner that prior to the service realignment program the Road Policing Command comprised 508 officers in road policing units, 22 officers in the centralised roadside drug-testing unit and 40 officers at the centralised state traffic task force, totalling 570 officers. To be able to identify how many of these officers were deployed to COVID-19 road checkpoints for the period prior to the realignment would require a manual interrogation of the rosters of each of these areas for the 28-day period against the 17-manned road border checkpoints and the 23 remote community checkpoints.

The commissioner's advice is that, whilst this large volume of data can be extracted from the police roster system, the police roster system is not designed for reporting along these specific lines and would require a manual filter of all the information relating to those 570 officers and require a significant amount of time to manually filter. The commissioner considers this to be an unjustifiable use of police resources.

**CHAIR:** The committee will now take a break. The hearing will resume at 4.15 pm with the examination of the estimates for the fire and emergency services portfolio.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.02 pm to 4.15 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister, and welcome officials. I now declared the proposed expenditure for the portfolio area of Fire and Emergency Services open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Minister, I call you to make an opening statement.

**Mr RYAN:** Before we formally commence this part of the estimates hearing, I wish to advise that on the last parliamentary sitting day of the year I made a statement in parliament in relation to the use of the large aircraft tanker, known as the LAT, in response to a question without notice. My response was based on written information provided to me at the time by Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, which was later found to contain a few inaccuracies. Subsequently, the department was asked

to provide my office with a written comprehensive brief on the use of the LAT signed off by the commissioner to enable me to correct the parliamentary record at the first opportunity at the estimates hearing in respect of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services. I do so now by seeking leave to table that advice.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted for that to be tabled.

**Mr RYAN:** The Palaszczuk government is delivering the frontline emergency personnel Queenslanders need now and for the future. Whether it is Police, Corrective Services or Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, the government is delivering in a big way. In relation to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services, we have seen in recent weeks the vital role of frontline emergency crews in protecting property and people's lives. Every day we see the professionalism and dedication of our firefighters. I commend the efforts of firefighters, both in the air and on the ground, in battling the blaze on Fraser Island. Crucially, no lives have been lost.

I can confirm that the Inspector-General Emergency Management is conducting a review into the Fraser Island bushfire. Earlier today the Inspector-General Emergency Management announced that the call for public submissions had begun. The IGEM will continue to receive submissions up until the close of business on 22 January.

I can also inform you that a joint investigation, led by the Queensland Police Service, is progressing into the start of the fire—how it started and who if anyone is responsible. This police investigation is ongoing with the identification and location of potential witnesses and persons of interest proceeding. I encourage anyone in the community who has any information about how this fire was started to please contact the Queensland Police Services or Crime Stoppers and provide that information.

This budget for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services includes a five-year initiative to enhance and sustain the ability of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to plan for and respond to incidents and major disasters. It kickstarts the addition of 357 new firefighter positions over five years. More than \$86 million will be spent between now and 2025 to grow the number of frontline firefighters by more than 15 per cent based on current numbers. This equates to the largest single increase in firefighters in Queensland history. That investment will coincide with the construction of strategically located fire and rescue stations in high-growth areas.

This budget also supports an increase of approximately 25 per cent in the Rural Fire Service budget from 2019-20 to 2020-21 and also confirms our support for SES groups, including the continued onboarding of SES groups in South-East Queensland onto the government wireless network. This budget also commences our delivery of our election commitments to enhance marine rescue services and support to Surf Life Saving Queensland.

We know more is being asked of our firefighters, QFES officers, staff and volunteers, so the Queensland government is stepping up to provide the support they need to do their job. The challenges confronting Queensland Fire and Emergency Services are rapidly evolving. In recent years we have seen severe bushfires, monsoons, cyclones and damaging storms impact Queensland. In addition, the budget will deliver over \$800 million this financial year for Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to support the work of the Fire and Rescue Service, the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and our other valuable partners.

Today I can announce a planned review into the structure of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services to determine whether the current structure best suits the needs of a post-COVID-19 world and the needs of Queensland communities in an ever-changing environment where disasters on a global scale are increasing in frequency and intensity. The aim of this review is to determine what works, what does not and what can work better. It is in the best interests of safety and in the best interests of Queenslanders to do so.

I take this opportunity to commend the members of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services for their outstanding work over the last few months from one extreme to another—from bushfires to floods and storms. Our Queensland Fire and Emergency Services are truly world-class. They do exceptional work and I commend them on their outstanding efforts to date.

**CHAIR:** I hand over to the deputy chair, the member for Currumbin.

**Mrs GERBER:** I hand over to the member for Burdekin.

**Mr LAST:** My first question is to the commissioner. Commissioner, which months in Queensland would you consider as the peak bushfire season?

**Commissioner Leach:** The peak bushfire season in Queensland is generally between September and November.

**Mr LAST:** On 16 September 2020, the Premier and then fire and emergency services minister put out a statement announcing the arrival of a large air tanker Bomber 141 ahead of the 2020 bushfire season. Commissioner, what was the commencement and end date of this contract?

**Commissioner Leach:** The large air tanker is a strategic asset. It is equipped to deliver 10,000 litres of fire retardant or firefighting gel. The aircraft is designed to reinforce firebreak activities and protect structural or economic assets. The 2020 LAT contract is for a standard period of 84 days. The contract has variable start dates and extension options due to the unpredictability of the Queensland fire season. It has a multirole capability to support severe weather. That is also being investigated. The 84-day period was determined based on an analysis of the recent Queensland bushfire seasons.

**Mr LAST:** How many times has this contract been extended, for what periods were these extensions made and what was the cost of each extension?

**Commissioner Leach:** The contract was due to expire on 23 November at last light. At that point, because we had been monitoring the progress of the season, a trigger was reached several weeks before that—two weeks before that—in terms of the extension of the contract. At that point, we also were aware that the pilots of the aircraft were legally required to be off duty for a mandated CASA rest period at the end of the shift.

We considered the likelihood of whether we would need to extend that contract at that stage. We talked to the operators about the potential to bring a second crew out from Canada. That would obviously require transit time for the crew and then we would have to comply with any COVID-19 quarantining requirements. Based on the fact that we had a network of contracted NAFC—National Aerial Firefighting Centre—aircraft to cover that period and we had contacted New South Wales Rural Fire Service about accessing their large air tanker to cover that period, we determined that it was more prudent to give the crew their mandatory five-day rest period rather than looking at the other option of bringing a crew out.

As at 8 December 2020, the current estimated invoiced costings for the large air tanker expenses is \$3.435 million. That is based on the last received invoices and the approximate operational expenses. As such, this figure is indicative and it is subject to increase.

**Mr LAST:** Just to clarify, how many extensions have we had? The contract finished on 23 November.

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes.

**Mr LAST:** Has there been one or two extensions since that time?

**Commissioner Leach:** We initially extended it for a two-week period from 23 November. Then we were reviewing it on a weekly basis subject to the prevailing weather conditions.

**Mr LAST:** In answer to my question, how many formal extensions have been made?

**Commissioner Leach:** One plus one at the moment.

**Mr LAST:** That figure that you gave me was indicative, as you said—

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr LAST:**—with further invoices to come in?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes.

**Mr RYAN:** Just to clarify, that is for the entire season. It is not just the extensions.

**Mr LAST:** Thanks, Minister. The commissioner is going okay. Commissioner, you stated that the aircraft was grounded between 24 November and 28 November because the crew were completing a mandatory CASA five-day break. Is it the case that there are no Australian qualified pilots who could have been utilised to fly that aircraft or was it in the contract that it could only be flown by Canadian pilots?

**Commissioner Leach:** The pilots that came with it are authorised to operate the aircraft out of Canada. There are pilots in Australia who can obviously fly a Dash 8-Q400AT, but none that have been trained to operate it as a water-bombing aircraft. We have a contract through NAFC with the operator Conair from Canada. It would be up to them to determine suitably qualified crew to be able to operate the aircraft.

**Mr LAST:** Where is this aircraft now?



**Commissioner Leach:** The aircraft is at Bundaberg.

**Mr LAST:** Is it still under contract?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is still under contract and operational at this point, yes.

**Mr LAST:** Until what date?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is still contracted until the end of this week—Friday I think it is.

**Mr LAST:** At that point does it return to Canada?

**Commissioner Leach:** We are making that decision now based on the change in the weather conditions here, bearing in mind that, whilst we have had a lot of rain in South-East Queensland, there are still a lot of parts of Queensland that are dry. We are making the assessment about the likelihood of needing a large air tanker like that, given that we call on the New South Wales large air tanker if we need it. We will make that decision over the next couple of days.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, on what date did QFES or local fire services first offer assistance to the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service in fighting the Fraser Island fires?

**Commissioner Leach:** The K'gari Fraser Island fire was sparked on 14 October 2020. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services have worked closely with the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation during all phases of the K'gari Fraser Island fire event. QFES has been engaged closely since the start of the fires. In fact, on the day after the fire was reported on the 14th—that is, on the 15th—the crew from Orchid Beach responded to assist the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service crew. We have been involved in the firefight right from the word go.

**Mr LAST:** Why then did it take until 27 November, I believe, before you assumed full operational control of that fire?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is important to recognise the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services does not own or manage the land where the fire is located. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services work closely with all land managers—in this case, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service—around the management of fire. We were liaising closely with the QPWS and monitoring their activities in terms of the management of that fire.

Because Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service are a land management agency and a fire management agency in their own right with fire management expertise in that environment, we discussed with them the ongoing management of that fire. It was not until the point where there was potential for assets and human life to be impacted that there was a discussion between our two agencies and the transfer of control to QFES was undertaken.

**Mr LAST:** During that period 14 October to 27 November, how many personnel did you have on the island working with the Parks and Wildlife Service staff?

**Commissioner Leach:** There are three rural fire brigades based on Fraser Island: Orchid Beach Rural Fire Brigade has 13 volunteers; Happy Valley Rural Fire Brigade has 24 volunteers; Eurong Rural Fire Brigade has 21 volunteers; and the River Heads Kingfisher Rural Fire Brigade also provided operational support. In addition, there were personnel from QFES's north coast region who were liaising with senior Parks and Wildlife people about the management of that fire.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what date was the Premier's office and the minister sitting here today first briefed on these Fraser Island fires?

**Commissioner Leach:** The minister has received briefings and updates since becoming the Minister for Fire and Emergency Services. I routinely brief the minister—a lot of those are verbal, sometimes otherwise—on whatever activity is going on around the state, including Fraser Island.

**Mr LAST:** You do not have a specific date when you provided a formal briefing to either the Premier or the minister in terms of a briefing note?

**Mr RYAN:** I have a note: 14 October. It is not for the commissioner to know when DPC provides the advice to ministers that they are responsible for. The commissioner briefs through DPC.

**Mr LAST:** Is that the case, Commissioner?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, that is right.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, in the estimates hearing last week the director-general of the Department of Environment and Science, Mr Merrick, said that fighting the fire was a joint effort right from first detection. Mr Merrick went on to describe QFES and the Queensland National Parks and

Wildlife Service as working hand in glove from the very beginning. Given there was a six-week delay in QFES taking over the management of the fire, how was this working hand in glove?

**Commissioner Leach:** Due to the nature of the terrain and topography of Fraser Island, being essentially a sand island—it is a World Heritage site and it has been left in a wilderness condition—the management of the fire has been difficult in terms of direct attack. Our normal way of addressing a fire like that would be to establish mineral earth control lines and then either allow the fire to burn out to that mineral earth control line or indeed burn back to the fire from a mineral earth break. Given the nature of the topography there, the limited number of tracks through the island and the environmental damage that heavy earthmoving machinery could cause in that environment, it was difficult to establish those control lines so Parks and Wildlife were effectively managing that vegetation fire as it moved through that environment.

Our rural fire brigades on the island were protecting their communities and undertaking mitigation works, burning out around those communities and working closely with the rangers on the island. Our regional personnel were liaising with regional parks personnel. I was liaising with the DG, Mr Merrick, and we were collaborating at all three levels. As I said, because of the nature of it, direct attack was not possible. It was not until the fire progressed to a point where it was going to threaten assets and people that the decision to transfer control was made.

**Mr RYAN:** Which is usually the case. That is how you fight fires in national parks.

**Commissioner Leach:** If I can give you a little time line summary. On 14 October the fire commenced. On the same day the Orchid Beach Rural Fire Brigade responded, and they were on the scene assisting Parks and Wildlife. On 15 October the first QFES air operations reconnaissance flight was undertaken. Between 15 October and 9 November there were 15 air operations reconnaissance flights conducted over the island, so they were daily mapping activities and observation flights. On 9 November the first QFES aerial water bombing commenced with a drop of approximately 15,000 litres. From 16 to 26 November approximately 1.5 million litres of water suppressants were dropped by QFES air operations.

On 24 November Parks and Wildlife established an incident control centre at their Rainbow Beach depot with a divisional command point remaining on Fraser Island. A joint incident management team consisting of members from QFES, Parks and Wildlife and the Butchulla Aboriginal Corporation was established within the incident control centre. On 27 November QFES formally assumed control of the incident from Parks and Wildlife.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what is the total area that has been burned out on Fraser Island as a consequence of this fire?

**Commissioner Leach:** At the moment we are sitting at 85,300 hectares, which is approximately 50 per cent of the island's total area.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what is the total cost of fighting the Fraser Island fire to date, including the aircraft, personnel and all the ancillary costs?

**Commissioner Leach:** As I indicated before, the cost of the large air tanker for the contracted 84 days was \$3 million. The difference between the figure I gave you before and \$3 million is the additional invoices we have received so far, but there will be more invoices than that—

**Mr LAST:** Correct me if I am wrong, the initial 84-day contract was \$15 million or \$3 million?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is \$15 million over five years. It is \$3 million per year. In terms of other costs associated with that, I do not have any figures to hand at the moment.

**Mr LAST:** Would you be in a position to find out those figures before the end of today?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, we will see if we can get some figures.

**Mr RYAN:** I just want to foreshadow that—and I have been very forthcoming about getting answers—this may be an answer we cannot get because the operation is still ongoing. We still have an incident control room—

**Mr LAST:** If you can do your best to get me that figure that is fine. Commissioner, with reference to page 16 of the Capital Statement, during the election campaign on 27 October 2020 the Premier announced \$35.38 million for replacement vessels and the establishment of an integrated marine rescue service under a re-elected Palaszczuk Labor government. Commissioner, in the budget expense measures I can only see combined funding for \$17.39 million between 2021-22 through to 2023-24. Where is the other \$18 million that was promised in the campaign?

**Commissioner Leach:** Queensland's dedicated marine rescue volunteers will be supported with \$35.38 million. That is an investment for replacement vessels and the establishment of an integrated marine rescue service. As you said, that includes \$17.383 million across the forward estimates commencing 2021-22 through to 2023-24 for the replacement of Volunteer Marine Rescue vessels. The remaining \$18 million will be directed to supporting the transition to an integrated marine rescue service and ongoing operational subsidies to squadrons and flotillas. That is grant money that we currently provide through to squadrons and flotillas to support them.

**Mr LAST:** That money is not shown as a separate line item in the budget documents; is that what you are saying?

**Mr RYAN:** It is part of the global budget. It is part of the \$800 million, which is the QFES budget.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, will brigades or flotillas that do not want to join the new integrated service be prevented from conducting their local marine rescue services?

**Commissioner Leach:** No. Our preference is that all squadrons and flotillas join the new service, but that is a matter for them. They are incorporated entities in their own right. We would like to encourage them to be part of the new entity, but in the event they are not that is a matter for them. We would certainly encourage them to be part of it.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, what modelling has QFES done in relation to the costs associated in replacing and updating the entire VMR and Australian Coastguard fleets?

**Commissioner Leach:** We are in the process of working that through. We have a project known as the resourcing to risk project. We are working with individual squadrons and flotillas to understand what their risk environment is, and therefore what is the appropriate type of vessel they need to cover that risk. Once we understand that, then we can go through a process to determine what the cost of building or replacing a vessel like that would be so that we can get the best value we can from the \$17-odd million that we have to invest.

**Mr LAST:** Is there an end date for that project?

**Commissioner Leach:** That has been underway for several months now. We anticipate that will take another few months to do. In the meantime, we are forming the working group so we can get key stakeholders from both Coastguard and Volunteer Marine Rescue together to start to work this up in conjunction with QFES.

**Mr LAST:** Is that a different group to the group that came together as part of the Blue Water Review?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is. We anticipate that they may be some of the same people.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, could you inform the committee of the date when the SES review compiled by retired Navy Commodore Campbell Darby was finalised?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, I can. The review of the Queensland SES was conducted by Campbell Darby over the period September 2019 to February 2020. The review report was completed in March 2020.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, since 2017-18 according to the annual reports, the number of QFES volunteers, which includes the Rural Fire Service and SES, has decreased by 5,000. Does Queensland have sufficient QFES volunteers for the upcoming cyclone and wet season as well as the current fire season?

**Commissioner Leach:** We do, but we are always keen to encourage more volunteers to join our organisation. Some of that decline has come about through our review of membership lists, working with brigades or SES groups and units to review the membership and make sure it is current. Some of that has been through removing members who are no longer active, who have moved away or resigned and not notified us of that intent, or who have in fact passed away.

**Mr LAST:** Commissioner, we are currently experiencing an extreme wet weather event in South-East Queensland, as we all know, where there is a significant demand on our SES volunteers. Do we have sufficient volunteers in South-East Queensland to meet calls for service?

**Commissioner Leach:** I believe we do. As you have rightly indicated, during the last 48 hours we have seen some severe weather that has impacted here—and that is on top of a storm cell incident only a few weeks ago which resulted in a significant workload for our SES volunteers. On top of that, our SES volunteers in South-East Queensland have been busy supporting Queensland Health and the Queensland Police Service with the response to COVID operations. In fact, our SES volunteers have

put in something like 115,000 hours of support to the border operations. Despite all of that, they are well prepared and ready for the upcoming severe weather season.

Having said that, we are also actively monitoring fatigue amongst our brigades and unit members because they have been very busy for a long period of time now. I think today marks the 503rd day of continuous operations of our State Operations Centre in supporting all of our operations, and that includes COVID. That is quite extraordinary, given that normally our State Operations Centre steps up for an event like a bushfire, flood or cyclone and then stands down again. So 503 days of continuous operations is unheard of here in Queensland.

**Mr LAST:** Minister, given the importance of the SES, will you commit to releasing the SES review as soon as possible, considering that it has been completed now for nine months?

**Mr RYAN:** I was almost going to make an extraordinary comment that I could go through the entire estimates without a question from the LNP, but I cannot say that anymore.

**Mr POWELL:** We are actually getting answers, which is unusual.

**Mr RYAN:** I give answers all the time.

**Mr LAST:** Yes, 15 minutes in length, but that is okay.

**Mr RYAN:** What are you talking about? We have been very respectful the whole way through, and we have been respectful of the committee. We have not had any attacks at all and the member wants to ruin this estimates and end on a sad note. That matter is before government. I am keen to get fully briefed about—

**Mr POWELL:** It has been—

**Mr RYAN:** I have been here for a month. Fair dinkum. I am keen to get fully briefed on it. Obviously, I will be speaking with the commissioner about the review, as well as key stakeholders like the LGAQ. My preference is always that reports be released publicly. That is my preference, but I need to be fully briefed before I can have those discussions within government.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you.

**Commissioner Leach:** Chair, in relation to the question from the member about the costs, as of Friday, 11 December the approximate cost of aviation support to the K'gari Fraser Island fire was \$6.5 million. The exact figure will not be known until all the invoices are received, but that was \$6.5 million at 11 December.

**Mr LAST:** And then you would obviously have your service costs on top of that?

**Commissioner Leach:** We would have other costs, such as fuel for firefighting vehicles, volunteers' time, a number of career staff who have been apportioned to the incident as well. They are largely absorbed within our day-to-day business-as-usual running costs.

**Mr LAST:** Thank you.

**Mr RYAN:** Relevant to that, Minister Littleproud and I have both activated the joint funding arrangements as a result of the disaster. Obviously, there will be reimbursement from the federal government at some point for some of those costs.

**CHAIR:** We now go to the member for Noosa.

**Ms BOLTON:** My question is to the commissioner. I am going to follow on from some points the member for Burdekin touched on. Regarding the integrated marine services, what funding will be made available to those volunteer organisations that do not wish to join? That is where this all started. They are sausage-sizzling their way to saving lives and that is what it was about. They just needed some more money.

**Commissioner Leach:** Currently, there is money that comes into QFES that we then present as grant money through to squadrons and flotillas. That grant money will continue because it is allocated to specific squadrons or flotillas. If they chose not to become part of the new integrated entity, they would still receive the grant money that they currently receive.

**Ms BOLTON:** So they would not get anything more than prior to the Blue Water Review?

**Commissioner Leach:** That is correct.

**Ms BOLTON:** You made a comment that the LAT from New South Wales would be available. Why did we move to get our own and lease our own if that was available?

**Commissioner Leach:** It is predominantly about availability and having a network of large air tankers right across Australia. It is also about getting an aircraft that is fit for purpose. In relation to the Bombardier Dash 8 Q400AT that we have, this is the first time an aircraft of that type has been used in Australia. One of the advantages that aircraft has is that it is quite powerful relative to the size of the aircraft. It can fly low and slow and then it can power up after a water-bombing operation. It is quite a flexible aircraft for its size. Given some of the topography around South-East Queensland and in fact right along the eastern seaboard of Queensland, we felt it was an appropriate type of aircraft for the types of fire and terrain that we experience here in Queensland.

**Ms BOLTON:** We have been given information over the last few weeks about the capacity of the LAT versus other types of water bombers. In the Fraser Island inquiry, will the comparatives be done about the efficiency and what can be delivered and with a price line in that? Will it also include the questions surrounding the access to water in sacred sites and the effectiveness of the retardant and the impacts?

**Commissioner Leach:** Certainly. The Inspector-General Emergency Management is here today and will be reviewing all of these aspects. I have some figures here in terms of air operations for the Fraser Island fire. I am happy to share that in terms of not only the large air tanker but all of the aircraft fleet we have used in terms of the suppression of that fire.

**Ms BOLTON:** I am happy to get that afterwards because I only have a short amount of time. In terms of the resources within the budget for QFES, is there a dedicated budget for fighting fires in national parks, or is that actually absorbed into the general day-to-day running? There was just a little confusion. You noted the decision to hand over control from QPWS to QFES. What is the actual trigger? I know you said discussions and a threat to assets, but national parks are a huge asset and an economic driver.

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, that is right. All of the considerations that are looked at include all of those things—cultural, heritage values, human life, assets at risk, buildings, structures, fire behaviour and potential for impact on the environment. There are a whole range of factors, and we were monitoring those over a period of time before the final decision was made, and that was based on fire behaviour analysis. We had projected where the fire was likely to move to each day and several days out. Our fire behaviour specialists were actually very accurate in terms of plotting the likely spread of that fire.

We had triggers set up for when there was potentially going to be a threat to Kingfisher Bay Resort or, in fact, Happy Valley on the other side of the island. We had triggers well in advance of the fire moving into those areas so that we could deploy resources into those areas. That was also a trigger to transfer control to Queensland Fire and Emergency Services because of our expertise in firefighting in those sorts of environments.

**Ms BOLTON:** Just to clarify, you do have a separate budget for national parks, or do you have to absorb it?

**Commissioner Leach:** No, we do not have a separate budget; in fact, we do not have a budget for fighting per se. Our business as usual budget that runs Queensland Fire and Emergency Services pays for all of our resourcing to deploy to any fire across Queensland.

**Ms BOLTON:** Thank you. I will hand over to the member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Before you do anything, I would like to welcome back Amy McMahon MP, member for South Brisbane.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You need to seek my leave to ask a question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Thank you. My question is for the commissioner. Earlier this year, the government announced that there were plans for \$15 million for our very own air tanker, but subsequently this is actually a plan to lease, not purchase, an air tanker. Does the budget only allow for 84 days leasing over September/November for each of the next five years?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, that is correct. But the contract is only for this first year. The contract will be renegotiated for the next four years. We will take into that consideration of start and finish times, because whilst the traditional bushfire season in Queensland has been September, October, November, if we look at what has occurred particularly in the last two years with the fire season we

have had, it is fair to say with the impacts of climate that we are seeing a change in the bushfire seasons. We may adjust the start and/or finish dates of that contract for future years.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Would the change in contract also increase the days that that lease goes for?

**Commissioner Leach:** It may. We would have to consider that in terms of the economic cost of that as well.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Are there plans to buy an air tanker or is it just a lease?

**Commissioner Leach:** At this stage it is a commitment to five years of a lease. Apart from the fact that there are no operators of large air tankers in Australia at the moment, with the exception of New South Wales Rural Fire Service which bought and operate its own, they are very expensive assets. To have them sitting around for six months of the year not being utilised would be a significant financial cost.

**Mrs GERBER:** I have one question for the commissioner in relation to Operation Cool Burn. Can you inform the committee for the 2020 year of the number of completed and planned activities?

**Commissioner Leach:** I thank the member for the question. We will just find the relevant brief. Operation Cool Burn was one of our most successful seasons for a very long time. In July 2020, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services released the Queensland bushfire plan. This was to enable Queensland's management of bushfire hazards through prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Operation Cool Burn 2020 focused on mitigation activities to reduce bushfire risks and their potential impact. It included engagement with key partners and stakeholders.

Operation Cool Burn ran from April to August 2020. QFES and its partners completed 567 priority activities in total, including 281 hazard reductions, 141 fire breaks and 145 community education activities. That represents an 80 per cent completion rate. It is not possible to achieve a 100 per cent completion rate due to climatic conditions, because these activities are essentially weather dependent. Sometimes it can be too wet and then it becomes too dry, particularly for burning activities. When that window for burning reduces, we need to look at doing other activities such as mechanical fuel reduction or the like.

**Mrs GERBER:** Are you able to provide the planned ones as well in those figures? You said what was completed but what was planned as well?

**Commissioner Leach:** I do not have a figure here, but I will just quickly tally those up. We completed 80 per cent.

**Mrs GERBER:** So 80 per cent of the planned?

**Commissioner Leach:** Yes, that is right.

**CHAIR:** We will move to government members. I call the member for Cooper.

**Ms BUSH:** I refer to the departmental overview on page 1-157 of the SDS. Will the minister provide details of the government's commitment to establish an integrated marine rescue service and funding upgrades to Queensland's marine rescue fleet, and the benefits for recreational boat users across the state?

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you very much, member. We have already had a few discussions about it and have been catching up with stakeholders. The member for Burdekin's old mate, I saw him last week—Vince Papale. He will have a talk to the member! Vince is from VMR, Volunteer Marine Rescue, is a strong supporter of what the government is doing around an integrated marine service and is keen to talk to the member for Burdekin as well.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding dedication of past and current marine rescue volunteers and the vital service they play keeping Queenslanders safe. Queensland's dedicated marine rescue volunteers will be supported with a \$35 million investment for replacement vessels and the establishment of an integrated marine rescue service. This includes \$17 million over forward estimates for the replacement of volunteer marine rescue vessels, with the remaining \$18 million directed to supporting the transition to an integrated marine rescue service and ongoing operational subsidies to squadrons and flotillas to ensure service continuity in the short-term.

No decisions have yet been made regarding the number of vessels that need to be replaced, although it is envisaged that, in this \$17 million tranche, up to 27 may be replaced, depending on the ability of industry to program vessel builds and the outcomes of a project that is currently assessing resources-to-risk profile.

The timing of the transition to the new Volunteer Marine Rescue entity will depend on necessary legislative change with the aim that VMR squadrons and coastguard flotillas will be offered the opportunity to transition to the new service. The transition will take place in a staged and planned manner to ensure continuity of service.

As well as the announced funding commitment, a marine rescue implementation working group will be established within the first 100 days of this term of government. We are already making progress on that; in fact, I met with key stakeholders last week. I have made it very clear to the commissioner that we are setting that up as quickly as possible. The role of the working group is to provide strategic advice regarding the sector in Queensland and to assist Queensland Fire and Emergency Services with planning and delivering future integrated service implementation.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services has advised that planning is well underway to establish the working group in early 2021, with Queensland Fire and Emergency Services aiming to have the group invites sent out prior to the conclusion of 2020. Once fully established, the new marine rescue entity will deliver a state-wide marine search and rescue service which can work and integrate with other emergency services including the Police and Ambulance Service while ensuring enhanced recognition and support structures for Queensland marine rescue volunteers. The importance of forming an integrated marine service in Queensland is greater than ever before with marine rescue activity increasing two per cent annually. The decision is the first step in providing a seamless and sustainable boating safety net to recreational boat users and tourists in the future.

**Mr HUNT:** Minister, on page 1-157 of the SDS it is stated that—

QFES will deliver services in line with the key focus areas of the *Queensland's Economic Recovery Plan* ...

How will QFES contribute to achieving the Queensland government's economic recovery plan?

**Mr RYAN:** This is an exciting story about investing in the frontline. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services continues its commitment to protect the lives and property of Queensland communities regardless of the significant events that have impacted the state through this year. In safeguarding the health of Queenslanders, our frontline personnel, including our firefighters and emergency services volunteers, are at the forefront of the government's efforts to minimise the spread of COVID-19 by supporting border closures, the management of incoming travellers and managing the large-scale quarantine needs of the state.

Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is supporting the government's commitment to creating jobs by incorporating an additional 357 firefighter positions into the frontline workforce over the next five years. This is an increase of around 15 per cent, as I said earlier, which is the biggest increase in Queensland history. As the primary provider of fire and emergency services in the state, Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is continuing to work with local governments and community partners to support the Queensland disaster management arrangements as required to coordinate the prevention of, preparedness for, response to and recovery from the impacts of natural disasters, which may be severe in this coming summer season.

**Ms BUSH:** I refer to the departmental overview on page 1-157 of the SDS. Will the minister please outline the investment being made in capital works for the south-eastern region?

**Mr RYAN:** Like we see in other agencies within my portfolio responsibility, there is a big investment in infrastructure and building, which supports jobs and supports the economy. The Queensland Fire and Emergency Services capital program is no different. This year, the 2020-21 financial year, will see \$42 million. This includes 20 new, replacement or upgraded facilities—a significant investment.

The 2020-21 Queensland Fire and Emergency Services capital program for the south-eastern region includes a replacement auxiliary fire and rescue station at Esk. The total project cost is \$1.674 million and the project is completed. It supported five full-time jobs during construction. Also we are seeing a replacement permanent fire and rescue station at Loganlea. The total project cost is \$4 million. This project is advancing. Completion is expected in June 2022.

The new Pimpama station is just finished. This new permanent fire and rescue station was a \$3.9 million project. It was finished in September and supported 12 full-time-equivalent jobs during construction. At Rosewood we are building a replacement auxiliary fire and rescue station. It is a \$2 million project. The project is currently out to tender and completion is expected in August next year. At Yarrabilba there is a new permanent fire and rescue station, a \$4.5 million project. The project is currently under construction and construction is due to be completed in July 2021. Of course, the commissioner will be out there to cut the ribbon.

**Mr HUNT:** I refer to page 157 of the SDS and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services' commitment to continue to deliver services to keep communities safe. Will the minister please outline the investment being made in capital works for the Brisbane region?

**Mr RYAN:** I will just go around the state and rattle off all these great projects! In the Brisbane region there is some big investment, too. This is a key project. We are looking to build a replacement mechanical workshop at Pinkenba for our mechanics who work on our fire trucks. It is critical. Every part of QFES contributes to the safety of Queensland—even the mechanics. The mechanics keep our trucks on the road. They make sure that things are fit for purpose. They deserve a good facility to do the good work they do. This will also enhance the productivity of that workforce, to ensure they have the space needed to do the work required to keep those trucks on the road, to keep the trucks safe and make sure our firefighters are kept safe. We are building a big, new replacement Queensland Fire and Emergency Services mechanical workshop at Pinkenba. The project total is \$9 million. We are in the design stage. Things are progressing there. It is a big project so it may take a number of years for us to finish that project, but things are underway. The money is committed and we are doing the design work there.

The other exciting project, which we have kickstarted by purchasing the land, is a new fire and rescue station at Mount Cotton. This is an exciting project because not only will it deliver a fire and rescue capability but also there will be some bushfire-fighting capability based there. It is a big project—\$7 million. That, of course, will also take a number of years to deliver. Progress is being made. We have purchased the land and other work will be done over the next financial year to progress the project.

**Mr HUNT:** With reference to the departmental overview on page 157 of the SDS, will the minister please provide details of the investment in capital works for the south-western region to protect Queenslanders and save lives to unite and recover for Queensland jobs?

**Mr RYAN:** I know that as Labor MPs we love building things because it stimulates the economy and supports jobs. I am not sure we need to go suburb by suburb, but there are a lot of projects so I am happy to do it.

**Mr POWELL:** You wrote the questions. You could have rewritten them.

**Mr RYAN:** We will get to Maleny soon. In the south-western region we have a really big project that is almost complete: the Charlton replacement regional Queensland Fire and Emergency Services headquarters and new permanent fire and rescue station. It is an \$18 million project. It is significant. Commissioner, I do not want to catch you by surprise but I know that Queensland Fire and Emergency Services is really excited about that project. Do you want to share a few of the details about that facility and what it will mean for that region?

**Commissioner Leach:** Thanks, Minister. The new facility at Charlton, as well as housing a fire and rescue station for that growth area in that part of Queensland, is also a new regional office for the south-west region. Out of that we will run, as well as our regional staff, our disaster management personnel and our State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service personnel. That is a significant facility for the south-west region.

**Mr RYAN:** Are you ready?

**Mr POWELL:** I have been waiting four years, Minister.

**Mr RYAN:** Ask me about Maleny. Ask me about north coast.

**Mr POWELL:** I can answer that one for you, Minister: promised in the 2017 election, still not delivered, got the block of land, still waiting.

**Ms BUSH:** Minister, in line with Queensland's plan to unite and recover for Queensland jobs, will you please provide details of the investment in capital works for the north coast region?

**Mr RYAN:** I will start off with the best one. I will start off with Maleny. There is a big project underway. The construction fence is up. Things are happening.

**Mr POWELL:** Woo hoo! Four years!

**Mr RYAN:** I know everyone is very excited.

**Mrs GERBER:** Four years for a fence!

**Mr RYAN:** Very excited. We will not get into the conversation about the block of land. I know that the member for Glass House was very interested in the block of land. The Maleny replacement complex is a good project. It is underway. It is a \$3.9 million project. It is going to have different aspects of



Queensland Fire and Emergency Services there—an auxiliary, SES, the rurals. It will support the One QFES model—all of them in the one location. It is very exciting.

We also have other projects underway in north coast. The replacement complex at Kilkivan was finished in August 2020—\$1.65 million. At Maryborough there a great big project. That is a new headquarters and auxiliary fire and rescue station. It is going to be more than \$10 million for that project. We are still going through the design stage. It is a very complex project because it is going to be made from wood. There is a partnership there. It will be a unique showcase station. We are partnering with industry. The timber industry is very important to Maryborough and that region. We are very excited about that project. I reckon it will even become a tourist destination: 'Come and see the new wooden Maryborough fire station.' It is a big project. We are expecting completion over the next few years.

Rainbow Beach is getting a new replacement auxiliary fire and rescue station. That project is due to finish in April. There is also a project at Yarraman and Wooroolin—a replacement auxiliary fire and rescue station. There are a couple more projects underway in the north coast region.

I do have some answers to give you from Queensland Corrective Services. I know that we took two questions on notice. One of them was the WorkCover question. I am advised by Queensland Corrective Services that there were 40 WorkCover claims as a result of assaults on officers in 2019-20. The 40 claims amount to 1,134 days of lost time. I am advised, as I foreshadowed, that it is not operationally justifiable to undertake a review of each individual file and the rosters to determine the number of overtime shifts and cost for coverage of lost time due to injury. That is the information I have been provided with by the commissioner.

The other answer is around Taskforce Flaxton. The question was asking if there had been any change since question on notice 24 was asked. Since the answer provided to question on notice 24 in February 2020, QCS has confirmed to me that the list of exceptions for recommendations to be completed by December 2020 has been revised. I am advised that the list of those exceptions includes recommendations 6(a), 6(b), 7(b), 11, 12, 13, 16(a), 16(b), 17(b) and 27(b).

**CHAIR:** Minister, on page 157 of the SDS there is a focus on developing a connected and capable Queensland in the face of emergencies and disaster events. Queensland experienced a number of disaster events in the past year. Would the minister please provide the committee with an overview of QFES's response to these disasters?

**Mr RYAN:** I was also going to have a go at you, Chair. I was almost going to say that you had not asked me a question, but you have fixed that up as well, and it was a very good question. Queenslanders remain safe due to the enormous efforts of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services in the lead-up to and during Queensland's last bushfire and severe weather seasons which saw a number of significant weather events affect our communities. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services delivered their capabilities throughout the last financial year in accordance with the Fire and Emergency Services Act and the Disaster Management Act. QFES worked in partnership with local and state government agencies and communities, other government agencies and key stakeholders to improve resilience and enable Queenslanders to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

Queensland's official bushfire season, named Operation Redux, commenced for the last financial year on 1 August 2019 and ran through until 31 January 2020. During this time Queensland Fire and Emergency Services faced some of the worst bushfires in 130 years, with the number of bushfires peaking at close to 100 on a single day. A state of fire emergency was declared for the first time in Queensland on 9 November 2019 and applied to 42 out of the 77 local government areas. This served to limit high-risk activities during extreme fire weather conditions.

During Operation Redux QFES provided over 34,000 responses to more than 8,000 incidents from close to 3,000 appliances. Nearly 6,690 hours of aircraft time from over 1,600 dispatches of 74 aircraft were undertaken. Sadly, 49 houses, 68 sheds and 33 other structures were destroyed by these bushfires. Eighty-three emergency alerts and over 3,000 community warnings were issued to keep communities informed.

Thanks to the amazing efforts of Queensland Fire and Emergency's workforce and volunteers, our partners and the actions from the community, no loss of life occurred as a result of these bushfires. We also want to say thank you to our interstate colleagues—715 of them from Tasmania, Victoria, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia—who assisted, as well as 50 international colleagues from New Zealand and the United States of America. In addition, support was also received from the Australian Defence Force.

Operation Dovetail commenced on 1 November 2019 and ran until 30 April 2020 to manage QFES's approach to the severe weather season over the last financial year. During the severe weather period Queensland experienced a number of significant events—Queensland monsoonal flooding in late January and early February, the southern Queensland heavy rainfall and flooding in early February, the south-west Queensland flooding in late February and Tropical Cyclone Esther and related flooding from 23 February to 9 March. During this period the State Emergency Service completed over 3,800 tasks and there were 744 agency supports requests for assistance, including storm damage, flood boat operations and incident management. Queensland disaster management arrangements were activated for a number of these events, including at local, state and district levels.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Mr RYAN:** I do have a final statement to make if you like, Chair, because I note the time.

**CHAIR:** Yes. We have come to that time of day.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Chair. I know you wanted to ask me another question, but maybe next year.

**Commissioner Leach:** Chair, just before the minister does the final closure, I have more information in relation to a question from the member for Currumbin regarding Operation Cool Burn. I can advise that there were 719 planned activities this year, so we completed 78.9 per cent of those planned activities.

**Mrs GERBER:** Minister, if only 79 per cent has been completed over the last five years and you failed to meet your targets each time, would you say that you are capable of being able to meet those targets and keep our communities safe given that for the last five years you have not met your own government targets for completed fire mitigation?

**CHAIR:** The—

**Mr RYAN:** I have to respond now, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Sorry; you would like to respond?

**Mr RYAN:** Well, I have to respond to that statement. You just have to listen to what the commissioner said before. It is very difficult to reach those targets every year because you have to take into account the weather.

**Mrs GERBER:** For five years you have failed.

**CHAIR:** Member for Currumbin, please do not interrupt the minister while he is speaking.

**Mr RYAN:** You cannot do back-burning if the conditions will be you will start a bushfire. That is a ridiculous proposition to have. You cannot do—

**Mrs GERBER:** Perhaps set some targets you can meet then.

**CHAIR:** Member for Currumbin, please stop interrupting.

**Mr RYAN:** It was very rude anyway interrupting the commissioner and myself.

**Mrs GERBER:** Oh! Poor baby!

**Mr RYAN:** Excuse me?

**CHAIR:** Member for Currumbin, please—

**Mr RYAN:** How juvenile!

**CHAIR:** Member for Currumbin, we have got right to the very end and you are being disorderly.

**Mrs GERBER:** Sorry, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Do not apologise to me; apologise to the minister.

**Mrs GERBER:** No.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Minister, you have the call.

**Mr RYAN:** Is that a reflection on the chair?

**CHAIR:** It is but—

**Mr RYAN:** The commissioner was very clear about the work that is done. I believe the words you used, Commissioner, were it was the most successful year when it came to Operation Cool Burn. You have to always manage this in relation to the natural environment and the weather conditions. You cannot do back-burning if it is too wet. It just will not be effective. You cannot do back-burning if it is too

dry and too windy because you will start a bushfire. You have to rely on the professionals who do this. There are hardworking volunteers who do this. There are hardworking officers and staff of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services who use their judgement to do the best possible job they can do during that operation. I am very proud of the efforts of the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services and I support the work that the commissioner and his team have done. Of course, Commissioner, every year you do the best you can given the weather conditions. I am not sure if you wanted to add anything more to that, Commissioner.

**Commissioner Leach:** I would just say that we use the term 'planned activities'. We specifically do not use the word 'target' because of all of the factors that have just been talked about. So we plan activities and we achieve as many of those as we can. In the event that we cannot do burning, we will look at other alternatives such as mechanical fuel reduction, but it is about achieving what we can within the weather window that we have.

**Mrs GERBER:** Thanks, Commissioner. That was not a reflection on you or the volunteers or your services. It was a reflection on the—

**CHAIR:** Deputy Chair! Thank you. The time allocated—

**Mr RYAN:** But how can it not be a reflection? Can I say a few things, Chair?

**CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr RYAN:** Thank you, Chair. Chair, I have to say how can that not be a reflection when the very words were an attack on the agency, but fair dinkum?

Chair, I take this opportunity to thank you and your committee for the conduct of today's estimates hearing. The work your committee does is critical to maintaining the fabric of our democracy by supporting accountability and transparency in government processes. I also thank Commissioner Carroll, Commissioner Martin, Commissioner Leach and their respective teams. Each of the commissioners leads frontline agencies that play an integral role in keeping our community safe. But probably more importantly I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the members of the organisations which were the subject of this estimates hearing. To our police, our emergency services officers, our SES, rural fire brigade volunteers, our fire and rescue firefighters and all of the staff that support their operations as well, our corrective services officers, our custodial officers and community corrections, they all do very important work and they keep us safe.

Commissioner Martin's leadership during COVID ensured that COVID did not get into our correctional facilities and into the prisoner population. That is an exceptional result. The invaluable work of Queensland Fire and Emergency Services ensures that we provide the support people need during natural disasters and the response. I also acknowledge the Inspector-General Emergency Management, Alistair Dawson, and his team, including Corinne Mulholland, for the work that they do, ensuring our processes are reviewed, assessed and improved.

I thank Commissioner Carroll and her team at the Queensland Police Service for the work that they have done this year managing all of the pressures on them and ultimately saving lives as a result of their efforts through COVID. I want to thank the Public Safety Business Agency as well with their support for the front line. That frontline work cannot be done without the work of the Public Safety Business Agency, and I know that they are very excited about the transition back to their home agency. They are coming home where they should be and I am very pleased to be seeing that transition take place. The royal commission into bushfires commended the work of the IGEM and the agency and suggested other jurisdictions should copy the Queensland model.

Can I also say thank you to some key people in the Premier's office for their continued support of this portfolio during the last financial year: Donna O'Donoghue and Paul Keene from the Premier's office. Their invaluable assistance is worth noting.

Thanks, too, to the hardworking Hansard team and to the parliamentary staff. I know that my team appreciates the good work that you do. Also, Chair, I would like to thank my team: Ellen, Shane, Dan, Nick, Jason, Dale and Phil. Thanks everyone and thank you to the people of Queensland for tuning in. I am sure they will watch this over and over and over again.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services has expired. Thank you to members of the committee and visiting members who attended the hearing. Thank you to Hansard and the attendants. Thank you to the secretariat for all their support. I declare the hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 5.20 pm.**