

## WEDNESDAY, 28 JULY 2021

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### ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE—STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PLANNING

#### Estimate Committee Members

Mr CG Whiting (Chair)  
Mr JJ McDonald  
Mr MJ Hart  
Mr RI Katter  
Mr JE Madden  
Mr TJ Smith

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#### Members in Attendance

Ms FS Simpson  
Ms A Leahy  
Dr A MacMahon  
Mr MC Berkman  
Mr SSJ Andrew  
Mr AJ Perrett  
Mrs DK Frecklington

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#### In Attendance

Hon. Dr SJ Miles, Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning

Ms D Cohen, Chief of Staff

Mr B Wecker, Senior Policy Advisor

#### **Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning**

Mr D Walker, Director-General

Ms J Joldić, Assistant Director-General, Portfolio and Government Services


Mr K Doss, State Planner, Planning Group

#### **Queensland Reconstruction Authority**

Mr B Moon, Chief Executive Officer

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**The committee met at 9.00 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Good morning. I declare this hearing of the estimates for the State Development and Regional Industries Committee open. I would like to begin today by acknowledging that we are meeting on custodial land of the oldest living civilisation in the world, and I pay my respects to the Jagera and Turrbal people and their elders past, present and emerging.

My name is Chris Whiting; I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, the member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The committee has granted leave for a number of non-committee members to attend and ask questions at the hearing today. Other members may seek leave over the course of the proceedings.

Today the committee will consider the Appropriation Bill 2021 and 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 chair or by order of the committee. The committee has authorised its hearings to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for broadcast of the proceedings are available from the secretariat. While mobile phone use is not permitted in the public gallery, an exception has been made for staff who are assisting witnesses here today and who have been permitted the use of their devices for this purpose. I do ask all present, however, to ensure that phones and other electronic devices are switched to silent mode if not turned off. I also remind everyone that food and drink is not permitted in the chamber.

In line with the COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings 2021 guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing while in this chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings 2021 guideline is available from the secretariat, and I will certainly be making sure that we adhere to social distancing guidelines at this table.

This year the House has determined the program for the committee's estimates hearing. The committee will examine the portfolio areas in the following order: state development, infrastructure, local government and planning from 9 am to 12.30 pm; agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry from 1.30 pm to 4.45 pm; and water, regional development and manufacturing from 5 pm to 7.45 pm. I remind honourable members that matters relating to these portfolio areas can only be raised during the time specified for the area, as was agreed to by the House.

The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Deputy Premier and Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning. As was determined by the House, the committee will examine the Deputy Premier's portfolio as follows: state development from 9 am to 10 am; infrastructure and planning from 10 am to 11.15 am; and local government from 11.30 am to 12.30 pm.

Visiting members who are present or will be present are: Mr David Crisafulli, Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater; Mr David Janetzki, the member for Toowoomba South; Mr Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana; Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore; Ms Ann Leahy, the member for Warrego; Mr Tony Perrett, the member for Gympie; Mrs Deb Frecklington, the member for Nanango; Mr Brent Mickelberg, the member for Buderim; Mr Steve Minnikin, the member for Chatsworth; Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim; Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani; Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar; and Dr Amy MacMahon, the member for South Brisbane.

I remind those present today that the hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in the Legislative Assembly apply to this hearing, and I refer to standing orders 112, 115 and 186. Standing order 112 states—

In asking a question, no argument or opinion shall be offered, or any fact stated, except so far as is necessary to explain the question.

Standing order 115 states that 'questions shall not contain'—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: I do not recall ever before having a full explanation of this process to the committee. This is completely unusual. We are already four minutes into the questioning.

**CHAIR:** I think you have just proved my point, member. Can I finish, please? Rule 115 states, 'Questions shall not contain lengthy ... preambles; arguments; imputations; hypothetical matters'. I remind members of standing order 185. I will not tolerate any grossly disorderly or disruptive behaviour. As chair, under 185 I can, after warning, order a member to withdraw for a stated period. I intend to guide proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members of the committee. I remind members that under standing order 181A and 181B we are examining the proposed expenditure before us.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the Deputy Premier, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask departmental officers to identify themselves the first time they answer a question referred to them by the Deputy Premier or the director-general. I now declare the proposed expenditure for the portfolio areas of state development, infrastructure, planning and local government open for examination. The question before the committee is—

That the proposed expenditure be agreed to.

Deputy Premier, if you wish you may make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

**Dr MILES:** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to address the committee today. I too acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and thank you, Mr Chairman, and committee members and other members who have joined us today.

This government has placed the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders and the creation of jobs for Queenslanders as our top priorities. There is no question that economies around the world have been impacted by COVID-19 yet, thanks to the Queensland community embracing the health advice, we now have a head start in the economic recovery as well as in developing and creating more and better jobs for Queenslanders. We are in an enviable position to capitalise on our world-class health response and turbocharge significant job creation for Queenslanders as well as those many thousands wanting to call Queensland home.

I am proud to say that my agencies are at the heart of this, working to grow and diversify our state's economy and support employment opportunities, and I am proud to see that our economic recovery plan is working. We have created 300,000 jobs since the worst of the pandemic and around 30 per cent of all jobs nationwide. Our unemployment has fallen to its lowest levels since before the Newman LNP government. We have a four-year \$52.2 billion capital program that continues to deliver on our \$50 billion infrastructure guarantee in the Unite and Recover Economic Recovery Plan. In 2021-22 alone more than \$14.7 billion—one of the largest capital programs in recent years—has been allocated, with more than 60 per cent being spent outside Greater Brisbane. This is expected to directly support around 46,500 jobs—nearly 30,000 of those in the regions.

While setting infrastructure strategy is important, it is equally critical that the capital program is managed and delivered consistent with our commitments. In 2020-21 we delivered 93 per cent of our capital program budget. In dollar terms this was one of the best performances over the past decade—a notable achievement given the COVID-19 disruption. The budget's flagship \$3.34 billion Queensland Jobs Fund is a game changer for enabling job creation in Queensland. This initiative will allow us to compete against other states and countries to attract industry as well as encourage existing businesses to expand here and employ more Queenslanders. The Jobs Fund incorporates the \$2 billion Queensland Renewable Energy and Hydrogen Jobs Fund to provide cheaper, cleaner energy to power more employment and more industries in Queensland.

Destination Brisbane Consortium's Queen's Wharf integrated resort development, almost in spite of COVID, continues progressing at pace, with spans of the Neville Bonner pedestrian bridge going into place. When it opens, the consortium expects to attract an additional 1.4 million annual visitors. Queen's Wharf will no doubt see plenty of visitors as we host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The opportunities that come with the privilege of hosting the games are enormous. Economic Development Queensland is already planning the athletes village development within the priority development area at Northshore Hamilton.

As well, new region-changing infrastructure is set to be built that will service the south-east corner for decades to come, and that will be vital as Queensland's population continues to surge. The new Growth Areas Team is working with local government, developers, utility providers and state government agencies to unlock land supply to cater for our increased numbers. Through our Strategy for Social Infrastructure and the Community Infrastructure Investment Partnership, we are partnering with not-for-profit organisations to support community driven solutions to local issues. Today we can announce the 12 organisations that will be sharing in \$8 million of funding to upgrade their facilities and expand their service delivery in centres particularly impacted by the economic and social impacts of COVID-19.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order. Sorry, Minister, but we are actually up to four minutes already.

**Dr MILES:** I have two more lines, member for Lockyer, if you do not mind. As you can see, State Development is working for the people of Queensland to drive economic growth, create jobs and cater for an increasing population. I am proud of what we have achieved and I look forward to continuing to deliver for Queenslanders. I thank the committee for indulging me an additional 90 seconds.

**CHAIR:** We will now commence questioning. I call the member for Lockyer. Do you have a first question?

**Mr McDONALD:** I refer to our shadow minister for state development.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Good morning everyone. Deputy Premier, can you explain what best practice principles are?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for her question.

**CHAIR:** I shall give the Deputy Premier some latitude in answering this one. I am not sure where this line of questioning is going.

**Dr MILES:** I thank the chair for allowing me to address it. The best practice principles do not rest in my portfolio and they are not, as I understand it, explicitly referred to in the SDS. I am happy to make some general remarks and then refer the member to the appropriate minister.

In general terms, this government thinks we should use the investments that we make to deliver the best possible jobs for Queenslanders. That is what the best practice principles are about. That is what our procurement policies are about. They are all about making sure that jobs are delivered as locally as is possible and that the Queensland government is a model employer delivering good, secure jobs. Where possible, we use providers and contractors who have the same approach and the same philosophy. That is very much the spirit of the principles. With regards to the specifics of them and how they are applied to specific projects and that kind of thing, they are questions best referred to Minister de Brenni.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have a follow-up question to the Deputy Premier. How much do best practice principles impact your budget?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for her question and I would reject the premise of it. The government is determined that our investments stay in Queensland where possible, employ Queenslanders where possible—

**Ms SIMPSON:** So you reject that they cost more and add more to the budget and the cost of infrastructure?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, let the Deputy Premier answer the question.

**Dr MILES:** When we budget for our projects, we budget to use Queensland contractors where we can. We budget to encourage them to deliver good, secure jobs for Queenslanders where we can. It is not a question of it adding to the budget. It is to the heart of what we budget for. The projects that we invest in are not just important in and of themselves; they are important for the economic contribution they make and for the jobs they deliver to Queenslanders. If the opposition are saying to Queenslanders that they do not think we should use local contractors, that we do not think they should be good employers, that is an argument you can make out there publicly. It is not one that is appropriate for this hearing.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, do you have a further question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** The Townsville stadium cost blowout of \$40 million was due to best practice principles. Industry estimates that this union deal will add up to 30 per cent more to the cost of infrastructure in Queensland. Was this a deal for unions or for Queenslanders?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair. I just wonder if there is an imputation.

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is on the record about the Townsville stadium cost blowout being due to best practice principles.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, the point of order is to me. I shall overlook that imputation there, but what I am going to say is that you need to verify what you have stated here, as we did in the last estimates. You have made some claims. Can you produce a document that verifies your claim?

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is in the *Hansard* quoting Minister de Brenni. It was admitted that there was an increase to the cost of the stadium due to best practice principles as I understand. That is in the *Hansard*. It is on the record.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, that may be so. We are examining expenditures today. You have made some claims here—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is relevant to how much money is available to build infrastructure.

**CHAIR:** You have made some claims here. I am asking you to verify that.

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is in the *Hansard*. Minister de Brenni mentioned the blowout in costs of Townsville stadium was due to best practice principles.

**CHAIR:** It would be good for that to be produced.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair. I wonder whether the term 'blowout' is in the *Hansard* as is what the member has just quoted.

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is 30 July 2019, page 4 of *Hansard*.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Bundaberg. That point of order is not probably correct at this point because I am still chasing what the member for Maroochydore has said. Member for Maroochydore, you have made some claims. You know from my rulings last year that you can make these claims but you need to verify that.

**Ms SIMPSON:** *Hansard*, 30 July 2019, Minister de Brenni—

**CHAIR:** Can you please show us the document?

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is in the *Hansard*.

**CHAIR:** I do not have that information with me—

**Ms SIMPSON:** I do not have to table *Hansard* here. It is in the *Hansard*.

**Mr HART:** Chair, point of order—

**Ms SIMPSON:** I also reference industry, and the Masters Builders have said—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, please hold on. We have a point of order.

**Mr HART:** Mr, Chair, I can state categorically that I have spoken personally on *Hansard*.

**CHAIR:** You have got to table it, member for Burleigh.

**Mr HART:** The committee should accept that, and I am telling you I have stated in the parliament around this issue.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order on that particular one.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Chair, to the Deputy Premier, industry has also indicated that this union aligned deal, the best practice principles, could add up to 30 per cent more on regional or metropolitan projects. I ask the Deputy Premier this again. How much do best practice principles impact your budget, given that it is hospital beds and a range of infrastructure that is impacted by this union deal?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, you have made these claims. You cannot verify them. I am going to—

**Mr McDONALD:** We table that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** What have we got here?

**Mr McDONALD:** That is information directly from the Master Builders.

**CHAIR:** You have got a press release from the Masters Builders Association.

**Ms SIMPSON:** As I indicated, Masters Builders are a reputable industry leader, and they are warning—

**CHAIR:** It is not *Hansard* though, is it?

**Ms SIMPSON:** No, that was the other reference. I had two references.

**Mr McDONALD:** We do not have a copy of the *Hansard* yet.

**Ms SIMPSON:** There was a reference in *Hansard* and I provided you the date where that matter is referenced. I have also referenced industry as saying in fact that it could be as much as 30 per cent.

**CHAIR:** Member, I have heard your repeated claims from this particular body. I am going to allow the Deputy Premier to answer that in a wideranging manner as he sees fit.

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for her question. As I have said, this government is determined that the money that we spend stays in Queensland where possible, employs Queenslanders where possible and delivers them good, secure, safe jobs where possible. The member referenced the Townsville stadium project and I was fortunate to see a game at the stadium recently. It is a fantastic stadium and worth every cent for the people of North Queensland, if you ask me. If you follow the line of argument that the member for Maroochydore is making, she is effectively arguing that less of that content should have gone to people in Townsville. She is arguing that they should have been—

**Ms SIMPSON:** No, I am arguing that the best practice principle actually benefits not just local people—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore!

**Dr MILES:** I listened to you.

**Ms SIMPSON:** That is not about local procurement. It is about a union aligned deal that—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I have called you to order. You will be warned under standing orders if you keep speaking over the top of the chair and also the Deputy Premier. I remind you of standing order 246, which states that quarrels are not permitted in this chamber. Deputy Premier, do you want to continue with your answer?

**Dr MILES:** I do want to continue. Can I indicate that I will not be quarrelling. I listened in silence to the member for Maroochydore for quite some time. I would simply ask committee members to show me the same courtesy.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Point of order, Mr Chair: am I able to reply when the minister also has imputations, because he actually tried to verbal me before and misrepresent the fact that we support local procurement? This is not about local procurement; it is about a union aligned deal which probably benefits tier 1s more than it does local businesses.

**CHAIR:** You have no point of order, member for Maroochydore. You have referenced what you were inferring. Can we let the Deputy Premier answer the question?

**Dr MILES:** The best practice principles are about ensuring that government projects are well paid, secure and safe. In arguing against them, the LNP is effectively arguing that the workers on that project should have been paid less, that their workplace should have been less safe, that there should have been less engagement—

**Ms SIMPSON:** Point of order, Mr Chair: I am being verbally by the minister. This is not about workplace health and safety standards—

**Dr MILES:** It is.

**Ms SIMPSON:**—because they stand within the legislation. I referenced page 54 of *Hansard*, just to correct that; it was not page 4 of *Hansard* in regard to that question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, when we started this line of questioning I said that I would give the minister fair latitude to answer this question. I have allowed some inferences and imputations in your question to go through and I am, therefore, giving the Deputy Premier some latitude in answering that. Can you please let him answer the question?

**Dr MILES:** The responsibility for the principles themselves and that project rests in the department of public works. As I have said, I was happy to take some latitude in addressing a question that really is out of order for this committee. I am more than happy to continue to talk about it in general terms. If the member wants to get into the specifics, I would urge her to attend the appropriate committee hearing. I simply restate that if you are arguing that we should not have these principles in place then you are arguing that the workers should be paid less and that their workplaces should be less safe. I certainly do not accept that argument.

**CHAIR:** Do we have a further question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair, I think I should be allowed to reject the assertion of the minister that this is about health and safety standards, because they are set in law. This is about an industrial standard that the government—

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question, Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** No, wait. Member for Maroochydore, you started off—

**Ms SIMPSON:** It is pertinent because I should not be verbally by the Deputy Premier with the mistruth.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, you started off your question with a statement. Can you please deliver your question as per the standing orders without that lengthy preamble? Do you have a question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr Chair. Mr Chair, you are a member of the CFMEU. Should you declare your interests in talking about union deals and the CFMEU and their role in setting this best practice principle, which is a union aligned deal?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I am indeed a member of a union.

**Ms SIMPSON:** CFMEU?

**CHAIR:** Yes, which is actually on the record. Member, be very careful where you are going with this. I am chairing this as much as I can in an impartial manner. If you have some inferences about my chairing of this, I urge you to tread carefully.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Most respectfully, Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** Is your question to me or is it—

**Ms SIMPSON:**—it was whether you should have declared that at the outset.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, is your question to me or is it to the Deputy Premier?

**Ms SIMPSON:** In this case it is actually to you, Mr Chair, just to clarify whether you should have declared that at the outset in your rulings on these issues?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I am rejecting entirely the premise of your statement on this.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Do you have a conflict of interest, Mr Chair?

**CHAIR:** No, I do not have a conflict of interest, thank you very much.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Well, why did you not declare this at the outset?

**CHAIR:** Actually, if that is the case, we are going to have a brief meeting. We will pause this for a moment.

**Ms SIMPSON:** This is a gag motion! This is all about protecting yourself.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, you are warned under standing orders. We are going to have a break for five minutes to deal with this issue that the member for Maroochydore has raised. We will resume in five minutes.

**Proceedings suspended from 9.24 am to 9.36 am.**



**CHAIR:** The committee has met and determined that there is no conflict of interest. Where were we? Did we have a question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Yes, Mr Chair. I appreciate that the committee meetings are confidential. My question is to the Deputy Premier. Given the increased costs for existing State Development projects in the pipeline and given the state of the budget, in light of these best practice principles and increase in costs, does this mean Queenslanders will see less infrastructure developed by your government?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Maroochydore for the question. I again state that this is not relevant to my portfolio or to the budget being considered; however, I am happy to continue to address it to the best of the information I have to hand. I am also advised that the best practice principles do not apply to any project being directly managed by any of my agencies, but I seek leave of the committee to table the government's *Best practice principles: Quality, safe workplaces*.

**CHAIR:** Can we have those distributed?

**Dr MILES:** While that is being distributed, members will see that the member for Maroochydore has directly and explicitly misled the committee. She indicated in her statement that the best practice principles are not about workplace health and safety. I refer members to best practice principle No. 1, Best practice workplace health and safety systems and standards. The best practice principles also go to best practice commitment to apprentices and trainees, which of course we support, and best practice industrial relations. The member also indicated that the best practice principles are not about local jobs. I refer members to page 5 of the best practice principles as I have distributed them. It states:

The local benefits test addresses:

- local jobs—quality and secure
  - where people live and work
  - permanency of employment
  - certainty of hours
  - fair wages and conditions
  - superannuation and workers compensation
  - genuine respect for the rights of workers to collectively bargain
- supply chain—use of local contractors, manufacturers and supply chain (local content) for the supply of goods and services
- use of local apprentices and trainees
- other benefits specifically identified (e.g. employment of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people).

These are the principles that are being argued against here. The Queensland procurement policy, which also applies to these projects, requires the use of contractors and suppliers, including manufacturers that employ local workforces. It seeks the increase in opportunities for apprentices and trainees, increased government procurement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, and sourcing of at least 25 per cent of procurement by value from Queensland's small and medium enterprises. They are all things that the member for Maroochydore disputed were in our best practice principles. They are at the heart of our best practice principles. They are why we have them.

**Mr McDONALD:** I raise a point of order, Chair. We have had a document tabled that we have not had a chance to read through. With respect, the shadow minister already said that health and safety was already governed by other legislation.

**CHAIR:** We do not need to go down the road of arguing the answer with the Deputy Premier. I will move that this be tabled. It is so tabled. Would the Deputy Premier like to finish?

**Dr MILES:** I just want to finish on some facts about the stadium. The Townsville stadium delivered 750 full-time jobs during construction; 85 per cent of the workers there were North Queensland locals—only possible because of these principles. There are 121 apprentices and 17 trainees and, importantly, 488 local businesses benefited through the supply chain.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Mr Chair, my question—

**CHAIR:** No, we are going to go to the member for Traeger. He is on the committee and has some questions as well. The member for Burleigh, if you want to contribute you will need to come to the front table. You cannot interject from the back, because you cannot be heard by Hansard; that is the important bit.

**Mr HART:** On a point of order, I am a member of the committee.

**CHAIR:** You are a member of the committee, but Hansard cannot hear you from there. You might need to arrange something with the committee members or with the visiting members up the front. The member for Traeger?

**Mr KATTER:** Deputy Premier, the Olympic Games will inevitably draw disproportionately from budgets in regional Queensland and impact on state development, enabling additional spending in South-East Queensland. Will the Deputy Premier commit to a fund that matches commensurate spending in regions so that 'equity in spending' is more than words?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Traeger for his question. It is an important one that we feel very strongly about. First of all, let me say that we are determined that the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will deliver to the entire state, and I think benefits will be accrued to the entire state. Certainly, the modelling suggests that there will be benefits right throughout Queensland and the nation. We are also determined to continue to see infrastructure investment right across the state, including in the regions. Members will note that the Commonwealth is contributing to the games related infrastructure in the south-east. This will provide for additional state capacity to spend in the regions over that 11-year period. The member would also be aware that currently 60 per cent of our capital spend is in the regions. There is no intention for that commitment to regional infrastructure to change into the future. We will continue to prioritise infrastructure in the regions, because we know how important it is.

**Mr KATTER:** I acknowledge that, Deputy Premier. Notwithstanding the federal input, revenue will not expand. It is what it is. Will you acknowledge that the infrastructure we are desperate for in Traeger will be more difficult to deliver when there is a bigger draw on the same budget? Hypothetically, if there was an Olympic Games, would you acknowledge that it would be more difficult to deliver what is not there now?

**Dr MILES:** I understand where the member is going. I would argue that it will provide greater opportunities to make those investments. Under the arrangements for the New Norm Olympic bidding process, we can only invest those funds into projects that would be needed anyway. Effectively, the Olympics delivers a 50 per cent Commonwealth contribution to infrastructure that would be needed anyway, so that provides additional funding that the state can use to ensure that we are delivering infrastructure into the regions. That is federal funding that would not otherwise have been provided to us for those projects that have to be delivered anyway. While it does affect the timing of those projects—we will be bringing them forward and able to do them sooner—these are projects that we would have to do anyway, without federal funding. The fact is that, with the Olympic agreement, we get federal funding that will provide us with an opportunity to keep investing in infrastructure in the regions.

**Mr KATTER:** Just to be clear—



**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, we are straying into infrastructure. That is in session 2. I will let you finish.

**Mr KATTER:** In terms of development, would the HIPC project in Hughenden fit under the initiative you are talking about—things you have already committed to—because I cannot see how that relates to the Olympic Games. To be clear, is that what you are talking about?

**Dr MILES:** To be clear, infrastructure that we are delivering or bringing forward in order to deliver the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games could only be infrastructure we would need anyway, so we would have to fund that anyway. The federal government contributing half of that provides the state with greater capability to invest into the regions. Projects outside of the south-east that we are already committed to will continue. There is certainly no intention to revisit those. I am happy to get some information about the Hughenden project that you have referred to. I do not have that immediately to hand, but certainly it is our intention that the games provide us with an opportunity to do more, not less.

**CHAIR:** We will go to some government questions. I refer to page 20 of the SDS and Economic Development Queensland. Now that the IOC has awarded the hosting rights to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games to Brisbane, where is the state government planning to accommodate the competing athletes? How is this going to contribute to Queensland's economic recovery?

**Dr MILES:** This is a good chance for us to continue that conversation about the games. The opportunity to host these games has instantly elevated Queensland to a world-class destination. Our local businesses and regional businesses will benefit and it will be a bonanza for our local tourism industry. It has provided substantial destination marketing opportunities as well as significant trade opportunities.

The global exposure will be four times greater than for the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games. The Olympic Games will also deliver supply chain procurement opportunities across a range of areas. It is also chance to showcase our whole state on a global platform like no other. We will share the same spotlight as Paris 2024 and Los Angeles 2028.

One of the many logistical hurdles in hosting an event such as the Olympic and Paralympic Games is to accommodate the competing athletes. Master planning for the games will be based on using existing infrastructure, where possible. We already have the majority of venues in place, with others easily delivered through temporary overlay solutions. Any new investments will be made to meet the longer term growth objectives of the state and deliver a lasting community legacy. The proposed site for the Brisbane athletes village will require significant construction. This means jobs for Queenslanders.

The state had put forward a submission to use Economic Development Queensland owned land within the Northshore Hamilton priority development area for the Brisbane athletes village. I am proud to say that Northshore Hamilton will be the home of Brisbane's Olympic village for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I saw the site firsthand this morning; it is going to be incredible. Northshore's prime waterfront location and its proximity to the CBD, competition and training venues and transport connections makes it an ideal location. The site will host over 10,000 athletes and team officials for the Olympic Games and 5,000 athletes and team officials for the Paralympics. Development of the athletes village within the Northshore Hamilton PDA aligns with the vision for this area and will accelerate the significant city-shaping project.

In legacy mode, the village will deliver housing supply across many key markets including aged care, retirement living, social and affordable housing, key worker, hotel, build-to-rent and traditional residential. This is another win for the Northshore Hamilton PDA, which is one of the largest waterfront urban renewal projects in Queensland with an expected end value of more than \$5 billion. Other recent milestones include the construction commencement of a new \$7.4 million waterfront precinct supporting over 30 construction jobs and over 300 ongoing jobs and \$14 million in road infrastructure supporting 46 construction jobs and generating over \$500 million in private sector investment.

Now that Brisbane has been confirmed as the host of the 2032 games, EDQ, in conjunction with the task force, will identify the preferred master plan for the athletes village. EDQ is responsible for land-use planning, infrastructure planning and delivering a development assessment in the 304 hectare Northshore Hamilton PDA. EDQ is also the master developer for the Northshore Hamilton area and owns significant landholdings in the PDA totalling 48 hectares, including land fronting the Brisbane River and a range of existing warehouse buildings. When fully developed, the PDA will accommodate up to 14,000 dwellings, deliver riverside open space, contain a community sports and education hub and support a range of mixed-use commercial, retail and industrial development.

**Mr MADDEN:** Deputy Premier, my question relates to the Queensland Jobs Fund identified on page 4 of the Service Delivery Statements. Deputy Premier, can you outline how the Queensland Jobs Fund will create jobs in growth industries such as the biomedical industry?

**Dr MILES:** Thank you, member, for the question. Queensland now has, thanks to this budget, a \$3.34 billion Jobs Fund leveraging opportunities to boost the state's industrial footprint, create jobs and strengthen our economy. The Jobs Fund is a single point of entry for companies that want to do business in Queensland. It brings together all of our flagship programs that boost industry development and investment under one umbrella. These are the programs that keep bringing businesses to Queensland and growing them here so we create jobs for more and more Queenslanders.

One of the exciting industries that is rapidly growing thanks to Palaszczuk government support is the biomedical industry. In June I was pleased to visit one of our world-leading Queensland biomedical research facilities to announce the Queensland Jobs Fund and its first exciting initiative. The Translational Research Institute at the Princess Alexandra Hospital precinct at Woolloongabba is a research facility that invests in lifesaving medical research and product development. At the TRI scientists are accelerating world-leading research to create lifesaving medical breakthroughs. Its homegrown success stories include next generation vaccine developer Vaxxas. Vaxxas grew out of the Australian Institute of Bioengineering and Nanotechnology at the University of Queensland before relocating to the TRI's commercial incubator space in 2015. It has now grown to become a successful biotech company which will soon be manufacturing needle-free vaccine kits at a new facility in Northshore Hamilton.

The Palaszczuk government included in the Queensland Jobs Fund a \$350 million Industry Partnership Program. The IPP joins existing programs that are supporting our job-creating growth industries. It will deliver cross-sectoral opportunities that unlock growth in multiple industries and their supply chains to create jobs. It will boost jobs in industries such as advanced manufacturing, hydrogen, biofutures, biomedical, defence, airspace, space, resource recovery, and mining equipment, technology and services. The positive economic impacts will be bigger, broader and better. Up to \$20 million of IPP funding will help establish the new Translational Manufacturing Institute at the TRI. The facility will be known as TMI@TRI. It will create more high-skilled Queensland jobs and further accelerate the development of one of the state's most important health research precincts. The facility will also support an estimated 500 jobs over 10 years. In its fully operational good manufacturing practice clean rooms, up to 100 people each year will gain hands-on training in clean room processes and advanced manufacturing. This will further grow the capabilities of a highly skilled workforce.

If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us it is that we need to manufacture more things in Queensland by Queenslanders for Queenslanders. Queensland's biomedical sector already employs more than 10,000 people across more than 1,200 companies. Through initiatives such as IPP funding, we will keep accelerating that growth. We will be ramping up Australia's capacity to manufacture vaccines such as for COVID. Queensland could very well one day be producing vaccines for the nation. The CEO of TRI, Scott Bell, has said that TMI@TRI will help keep more of our startups located in Queensland. They will be able to advance the commercialisation of their products right here and realise economic and export opportunities as Queensland entities.

From the very start of the COVID pandemic, Queenslanders have shown the world the capability of our biomedical research and develop. There is no doubt that scaling up manufacturing with IPP support is the next frontier for our biomedical industry. The TMI@TRI project aligns with the aims of the government's Queensland Biomedical 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan to make Queensland a globally competitive Asia-Pacific biomedical hub by 2027. TRI also sought Australian government funding under the Modern Manufacturing Initiative for this expansion. At this stage it has refused to support this important project. We will continue to lobby the Morrison government to reconsider because we know how vital this sovereign capability is not just for Queensland but for the whole of the country.

**CHAIR:** We will go to a question from the member for Bundaberg and then briefly to the member for South Brisbane.

**Mr SMITH:** Along the same lines, Deputy Premier, my question is in reference to developing the economy area in the SDS. Could you please outline the Palaszczuk government's plan to create jobs and vaccine manufacturing in Queensland?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. The Palaszczuk government has delivered a proposal to the Commonwealth to manufacture COVID vaccines in Queensland. The government is in discussions with multiple leading vaccine manufacturers, including Queensland based biopharmaceuticals manufacturers. Last week I wrote to the federal Minister for Industry, Science and Technology to seek Commonwealth support. If successful, any one of these deals could make

Queensland a global hub for the production of COVID vaccines. Of course we would love to see more than one progress. We have the technology and the skilled workforce to be a major player in the manufacture of COVID and other vaccines internationally. Over a number of years we have invested heavily in our advanced manufacturing and biopharmaceuticals industries and have the capacity to contribute even more now that we have established the Queensland Jobs Fund. We want to harness that knowledge and technology to mass-produce vaccines and help the federal government speed up the vaccination rollout in Australia.

The greatest challenge to rebuilding our economy and recovering from the pandemic is the lack of vaccines. While I welcome the announcement from the Morrison government that it has contracted Pfizer for vaccines in 2022 and 2023, I am disappointed that it has not attempted to secure any local manufacturing in the deal. Last year it said it would take too long to develop manufacturing capability, but if we had started then we would be so much closer to domestic vaccine manufacturing now. The sooner we start, the sooner we will see those all-important vaccines rolling off the production line right here at home. Mobilising Queensland's burgeoning biopharmaceutical manufacturing sector to produce vaccines here could shorten the pandemic and I think the whole country is counting on us for that hope right now.

**CHAIR:** Member for South Brisbane, you have time for a quick question.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the director-general. As part of planning for infrastructure associated with the 2032 Olympics, can you guarantee the protection of East Brisbane State School and what investigations have been made into establishing QEII Stadium as the main stadium?

**CHAIR:** Asking for a guarantee is similar to asking for an opinion, but I am going to allow the director-general to broadly talk about the issue of that school.

**Mr Walker:** In terms of the detailed planning for delivery of the Olympic Games in 2032, that is being led by a group outside of this department. We will certainly contribute towards that in due course and ensure that we are getting the best possible outcomes in terms of the infrastructure delivery, but the detail relating to the East Brisbane State School is a matter for the 2032 Taskforce as it currently stands.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Is there a time frame in terms of getting feedback from that task force?

**Mr Walker:** For the work itself—and, again, it is outside of my area—what I would say is 2032 is some way away. There will need to be a significant amount of planning that needs to be done and I can only imagine that that work is currently underway, but I could not advise what the time frames would be.

**CHAIR:** Before we move to the next session, the member for Traeger had a question about a specific issue. Member for Traeger, was that answered or did we need to get back to you at some stage?

**Mr KATTER:** No, I was satisfied with the answer. I have a follow-up, if that is possible.

**CHAIR:** You are happy with that. Excellent.

**Mr KATTER:** I have another question if there is time.

**CHAIR:** We are literally about to change over.

**Mr KATTER:** I will save it for the next one.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for consideration of the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio area of state development has expired. The committee will now consider the infrastructure and planning areas of the portfolio area until 11.15. I will ask the Deputy Premier to make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

**Dr MILES:** I am happy to rely on the previous opening statement.

**CHAIR:** Then we will commence questioning. Member for Warrego?

**Ms LEAHY:** I have a question to the director-general. On page 15 of last year's SDS there was a line item that provided a total of \$17 million for the Bundaberg flood levee. Where is that line item expressed in this year's budget?

**CHAIR:** Member for Bundaberg, you cannot answer that. It is not for you.

**Ms LEAHY:** I am sure he would be interested in the answer.

**Mr SMITH:** I have the answer.

**CHAIR:** The member for Bundaberg says that he has the answer, however, it is directed to the director-general.

**Mr Walker:** The number itself, that \$17 million that was indeed in last year's papers, is being held centrally by Treasury.

**Ms LEAHY:** That money is still available to the Bundaberg community? There has not been any cut?

**Mr Walker:** No, it is held centrally for that purpose.

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you. We have a question for Brendan Moon from the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. Has there been any request from the QRA to councils to have separate bank accounts for disaster funding provided by the QRA?

**Mr Moon:** Currently QRA administers the disaster recovery funding arrangements for Queensland. The size of the program that we are currently administering is some \$2.6 billion and it is across 2,333 individual projects throughout Queensland. In 2021, \$668 million was paid across all 77 local government areas. At any one time, QRA has around \$100 million in cash advances across all councils. What we have found is that the environment has become increasingly complex for us and councils. In 2015 the Reconstruction Authority managed one program; in 2021 this is now 13 individual programs. Local governments are also managing many different funding sources. We are always looking for opportunities to better manage the state's risk and also councils' risk, given the large volume of grant advances that have been issued. We recognise that advances to councils are important in supporting their recovery and reconstruction works.

**Ms LEAHY:** My question was: has the QRA requested separate bank accounts for disaster funding that goes to councils? Has the QRA made that request?

**Mr Moon:** We are consulting with councils, with the Queensland Audit Office and also with the department of local government to assist to create better financial accountability not only for QRA but also for councils. At this particular stage it is only a proposal, and we are looking at a number of options about how we will better manage the risk for the state and also for councils.

**Ms LEAHY:** Has the QRA, working with the Audit Office, looked at any of the increased audit costs that there will be to councils if this is required? Have you done any modelling on those increases to costs to councils which will be borne by councils?

**Mr Moon:** In relation to this proposal, it is at an early stage at this particular point in time. We have reached out to councils to get an understanding of their particular situations and we are currently working through that piece with the Queensland Audit Office to understand the implications from a risk perspective. We are also working with councils to understand what the cost implications may be into the future. As I said, it is a proposal at this particular point in time and it has not been settled as the best way in managing the risk for the state and councils.

**Ms LEAHY:** How many councils have made submissions for extension of time for works that cannot be completed in the two-year time frame? Do we know how many are currently on extensions?

**Mr Moon:** In relation to the 2018-19 program, we currently have 40 councils that have extensions of time. As the committee would be aware, under the disaster recovery funding arrangements there is a two-year allowable time limit for councils and state agencies to deliver reconstruction works in the aftermath of a disaster. What we have seen over the last number of years here in Queensland is the repeated impact of numerous events. Of the 72 councils that currently have a reconstruction program, some 44 are managing multiple impacts and multiple events. Also we have had the impact of COVID, which has certainly impacted the supply of materials and also contractors to deliver works. Where councils have applied for that, we have granted an extension of time. In relation to the Burke Developmental Road for example, because of this year's events it is difficult for those councils in the north-west to deliver works because access is impeded by the condition of those roads.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Deputy Premier, I would like to discuss the 2032 Olympics, which we support, and the fifty-fifty partnership between the state and federal government. Have you had discussions with the federal government about best practice industry conditions or best practice principles and the cost impact on building infrastructure related to the Olympics?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure where that one is going, Deputy Premier, but feel free to take a broadbrush approach to it.

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for the question and thank you, Chair, for allowing me to address it. Those discussions are being led by the Premier and by a task force within DPC. That is where those questions would be best directed, although I emphasise, as I said before, that we are absolutely committed that projects that are funded by the Queensland government are safe, use local suppliers

and deliver good, secure jobs, including apprenticeships and traineeships, including for First Nations people. We support that. Can I also urge the member for Maroochydore, in referring to the 2032 games, to refer to them as the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. I know that is very important to members of our community.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Fair point. For the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, can you confirm whether the federal government will be incurring the costs of the best practice conditions or will it be the state government that will bear the additional costs?

**CHAIR:** That is very similar to the first question. Deputy Premier, you have already answered it. Did you want to add anything?

**Dr MILES:** I emphasise that those discussions are being led by the Premier and DPC. However, we do not see safe workplaces as a cost. We do not see local procurement as a cost. We do not see good, local, secure jobs, apprenticeships, traineeships and employment for First Nations people as costs. We see them as benefits.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. The number of new homes has fallen 22.4 per cent in the past decade to the lowest level since records began. Between 2011 and 2020 there has been a substantial decrease in the new housing lots that have been registered. This is despite Queensland's population growing 8.3 per cent over the same period, causing housing costs to skyrocket. Deputy Premier, do you admit that bad planning is behind Queensland's housing crisis?

**Mr MADDEN:** Chair, I raise a point of order. There is an obvious imputation of misconduct in that question about 'bad planning'. I ask my friend to rephrase her question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, I would invite you to rephrase the question. It does touch on some imputations but, more importantly, you have quoted figures and after our experience in the first hour I would like to see that verified. You talked about 22 per cent and I invite you to verify that. Would you like to recast the question?

**Ms SIMPSON:** I can certainly reference the Queensland Government Statistician's Office in respect to those figures. I will rephrase the question. Deputy Premier, there is a housing crisis. It has been brewing for 10 years. Will you apologise to first home owners who now face the reality that they will be unable to afford a home?

**CHAIR:** I will rule that question out of order. Do you have another question, member for Maroochydore?

**Ms SIMPSON:** Yes, to the Deputy Premier.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair. What is the reason for ruling that question out of order?

**CHAIR:** I gave a direction on recasting the question. There were imputations and inferences in it.

**Mr McDONALD:** Not to a member—

**CHAIR:** I am ruling on that particular point of order, thank you. Certainly, once we got to the point about 'will you apologise', I decided to rule that out of order. I note that the member for Maroochydore does have another question.

**Ms SIMPSON:** There are plenty of questions about the housing crisis.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, you will not help yourself by using such terms, but please continue.

**Ms SIMPSON:** My question is to the Deputy Premier. There is a housing crisis. People are desperate for housing and this cuts across all demographics. For the past 10 years there has been a falling number of release of stock. Deputy Premier, what are you going to do to ensure that people who are desperate for a house have a fair go and what is going to be done in the immediate future?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, you are still loading that question with a variety of inferences, imputations and things that are not yet verified. I would certainly point out that your question is about increasing housing supply. I am going to allow the Deputy Premier to address that in the broadest possible way.

**Dr MILES:** I do appreciate the chance to address the questions that the member for Maroochydore has raised because it has been a very clear focus of myself and my agencies since I took over this portfolio. Earlier this year I asked the State Planner to work with Economic Development Queensland to establish the Growth Areas Delivery Team to proactively address land supply challenges. The Growth Areas Delivery Team is working with councils, developers and industry to solve

South-East Queensland's short-term land supply challenges and use our under-utilised land to provide good affordable housing for local residents. The team is focusing on ensuring affordable homes close to SEQ's major cities, planning for diverse housing so that people from all stages of life have options when looking for a home and using our existing urban land rather than expanding our cities, which means more protection for our environment.

A neighbourhood in Caboolture West has been named as the first pilot site and will be used to help unlock growth, housing choice and affordability. In addition to Caboolture West, the team will begin working with Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Redlands and the Sunshine Coast to identify similar projects. EDQ has also signed off on an additional 3,091 lots for new homes in the Caloundra South PDA. We are using the Building Acceleration Fund, which is part of the Queensland Jobs Fund, to facilitate catalytic infrastructure projects to drive private sector investment, unlock development and create construction and long-term employment. Projects announced to date include \$30 million to fast track two infrastructure projects at master planned communities, that is, Brookhaven and Yarrabilba. It is estimated that those two projects alone will generate over 130 construction jobs as well as indirect and operational jobs. We are also investing \$10.5 million in loan funding to Unitywater as part of the Growing Areas Delivery Team pilot site at Caboolture West. I can confirm for the member that our efforts since the announcement of the Growth Areas Delivery Team have been successful. This year alone the state government has helped unlock more than 46,000 lots across South-East Queensland and bring forward thousands more.

Today I can announce we are delivering even more catalytic infrastructure, unlocking more than 27,000 residential lots in Greater Flagstone. We are investing almost \$37 million to deliver critical trunk-road infrastructure for the Greater Flagstone Priority Development Area. The population in the Greater Flagstone PDA alone is projected to grow to around 120,000 over the next 40 years. This investment will not only open up more lots within Greater Flagstone but also allow the construction of New Beith Road to be brought forward, beginning the much anticipated second access road for existing Flagstone residents. Along with an extension of Teviot Road, the \$31 million will deliver two key road corridors that will comprise dual carriageways with separated bike paths and footpaths. The project will create 165 local jobs.

We are also investing a further \$5.91 million to construct a new road and water main in the Ripley Valley PDA, which will support the delivery of 3,000 lots at Stockland's Providence estate, 230 lots at Cedar Heights and 2,300 lots at Intrapac's Whiterock. The infrastructure will be key to contributing to the land supply and housing affordability challenges that the member has mentioned. It will also result in the acceleration of significant investment by the private sector, with the total works valued at approximately \$50 million. The infrastructure agreements should be finalised by October with works underway afterwards.

Housing supply is a complex issue requiring various parties to work together. That is why I asked the State Planner to work with EDQ to establish the Growth Areas Delivery Team. Of those 46,000 lots I outlined—47,391 lots—3,091 are in Caloundra South; 3,000 are in Caboolture West; 5,000 are in southern Redland Bay, supported by \$15 million of state investment; 5,600 are in Ripley Valley, supported by \$5.91 million of our investment; Bahrs Scrub has unlocked 1,700 lots with \$15 million from the Building Acceleration Fund; Greater Flagstone has 27,000 lots with \$31 million of our funding; and 2,000 lots at Yarrabilba. As the member can see, there has been very significant work from the State Planner and the Growth Areas Delivery Team to deliver nearly 50,000 additional lots since November 2020.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I have a follow-up question to the Deputy Premier. When there are disputes between government agencies, who takes the lead? I understand there are a number of examples, such as TMR and the Growth Areas Delivery Team potentially at Caboolture West with the alternative Bruce Highway corridor and water infrastructure. Who takes the lead and resolves that, given that there has been recent experience of sometimes six-month delays between different jurisdictions and no-one resolving the issues?

**Dr MILES:** The member points to a wide range of different scenarios that can lead to delays in approvals or development approvals. The role of different agencies varies depending on what the circumstances are. What we have sought to do with the Growth Areas Delivery Team is to put them in the centre of that government decision-making and coordinate other state government agencies and local government and their approvals processes, as well as developers. Often the challenge here is disparate ownership. That is the role of the State Planner there. That is the key role that the Growth Areas Delivery Team is playing, to do that coordination across levels of government, agencies and with developers and other parties.

**Ms SIMPSON:** As a follow-up question, I refer to a housing development in Kilcoy, the Caballo Park Estate development, which was delayed over six months, as I understand it, because of a dispute between Transport and Main Roads and Urban Utilities. Deputy Premier, what action did you take upon learning about this extensive delay to have the matter resolved and lots released? What action did you take given that this dispute was so impacting?

**CHAIR:** Deputy Premier, I will allow that one to go through, but certainly the member is referencing things that obviously the department may well know about. None of us up here know about this particular one.

**Ms LEAHY:** Mr Chair, can you just let the minister answer?

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, I am still chair here today. Deputy Premier, did you want to take that or refer that onto someone else?

**Dr MILES:** I am aware that the State Planner directly sought to address the concerns that the member has raised in regards to that particular project. With the committee's indulgence, I would like to ask the State Planner to come forward and outline his understandings of the facts and the role that he played and any other information he might have to hand.

**Mr Doss:** The matter referred to arose in response to changes in procedures between Urban Utilities and Transport and Main Roads. I became aware of that matter when the developer contacted the department about that. Myself and some other technical officers from my agency directly intervened. We had direct discussions with the developer. We had direct discussions with Urban Utilities. We had direct discussions with Transport and Main Roads. There were a number of meetings convened. Subsequently, a new process has been sorted out for that. This has come about as a result of change in risk and other matters, particularly with respect to the building of water utilities in Main Roads corridors. So there is an interim solution for this which is now in place and working, and I believe the developer has everything he needs to proceed with that. We are also looking at some changes potentially to the regulations to put in place better arrangements for moving that forward.

**CHAIR:** We are now going to move to questions over here. Member for Bundaberg, you have got a question?

**Mr SMITH:** Deputy Premier, could you please provide an update on the Building Acceleration Fund and how it is unlocking land and creating jobs?

**Dr MILES:** As I have just outlined, the Building Acceleration Fund is an initiative under Queensland's economic recovery plan which allows us to facilitate catalytic infrastructure projects that generate private sector investment, unlock development and create jobs. Over \$69 million has been co-invested in six projects to date which will accelerate the delivery of essential infrastructure and create jobs. The fund forms part of the Queensland government's flagship \$3.34 billion Queensland Jobs Fund. With interstate migration into Queensland at an all-time high, a key component of the fund is to unlock land supply. The fund is a key tool for the growth areas team in facilitating private development investment.

To date we have approved more than \$92 million to support councils and industry with the critical infrastructure required to unlock land in growth areas. In total, four of the projects include the delivery of vital infrastructure to open up more residential lots for development in southern Redland Bay, Caboolture West, Yarrabilba and Bahrs Scrub. This includes co-investing \$10.5 million in loan funding to deliver water supply and sewerage infrastructure to accelerate the construction of up to 3,000 new homes in the Caboolture West Neighbourhood Development Plan 1. This is part of a broader Caboolture West growth area I spoke about earlier and is expected to eventually provide about 30,000 homes for around 78,000 Moreton Bay locals.

Through the fund, we are also co-investing \$15 million with Lend Lease to construct the new waste water treatment plant to service the emerging southern Redland Bay area. This will bring forward the construction of up to 3,000 residential dwellings and an additional 2,000 lots outside the Lend Lease development.

We are also co-investing \$15 million to support construction of Bahrs Scrub roadworks project to improve access and transport efficiency through Bahrs Scrub in the Logan area. This project will accelerate the development of 1,780 dwellings and a retail centre in Frasers Property's Brookhaven masterplanned community.

We are also co-investing \$15 million with Lend Lease on necessary works for the next 2,000 residential lots in Yarrabilba situated in the Logan corridor. The works include earthworks, water, sewerage, electrical and communications mains, streetscaping and roadworks. This project will pave the way for the site of Yarrabilba Primary School.

The fund is not solely dedicated to address land supply challenges, though. Earlier this year I was able to inspect works at Archerfield Airport as part of the \$13.8 million co-investment under the BAF to extend the runway and other infrastructure upgrades. These upgrades will help Archerfield Airport grow as an economic and employment hub, unlock further private sector investment and new business attraction and create jobs. The works include extension to the main runway and the upgrading of existing taxiways and other aviation infrastructure for the airport's transition to a major employment hub in the south-west industrial gateway.

Lastly, through the fund, we are investing \$476,735 to renovate the iconic Min Min Encounter building in Boulia. The renovations will start later this year and include works to the facade of the heritage building as well as essential disability access upgrades. These necessary works will have a significant positive impact on Boulia's tourism offering that flows on into the local economy and strengthens Queensland's outback tourism offering for visitors to explore and stay another day.

**CHAIR:** Deputy Premier, this question is with reference to the Queensland Reconstruction Authority identified on page 25 of the SDS. Can you update the committee on what the Palaszczuk government is doing to drive down the cost of insurance for Queenslanders?

**Dr MILES:** It is an important question. Queenslanders know only too well how susceptible our state is to natural disasters with our state's north and far north bearing the brunt of cyclone seasons, bushfire seasons and extraordinary rain events. The floods in Townsville in 2019 as a result of the monsoon trough are still fresh in the north's mind and reconstruction from Tropical Cyclone Niran is still underway.

The reality of living in Queensland is that we have to be prepared for the unexpected which is why affordable and accessible insurance is critical. Unfortunately we have seen insurance premiums increase in recent years with climate change exacerbating the risk of bigger and more severe weather events. With close to 19 natural disasters in the past decade, Queensland gets hit harder than any other state in the country. Skyrocketing premiums make insurance unaffordable for families and businesses in some of our most susceptible communities, just where it is needed most. The Palaszczuk government is committed to driving down the cost of insurance in North and Far North Queensland where the risk is greatest.

I am pleased to advise the committee today that we will be making \$10 million available through the North Queensland mitigation program to fund mitigation projects to help reduce the cost of insurance in North and Far North Queensland. The \$10 million has been allocated in this year's budget in response to recommendations from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Northern Australia insurance inquiry's final report released last December. The ACCC's report confirmed what Queenslanders already know: improving the resilience of properties and communities to natural disasters delivers benefits not only in risk mitigation but also driving down the cost of insuring properties.

Eligible local governments in Queensland coastal communities from Bundaberg to the Northern Territory border will be able to apply for grants through the \$10 million program. Councils can apply for funding for mitigation initiatives that may assist in reducing the cost of insurance for their communities. This could include physical mitigation works that reduce disaster risk, as well as studies or investigations to support a better understanding of a community's risk. A range of activities can be delivered through the program, including floor height surveys, drainage system, levies and associated studies or flood mapping.

North and Far North Queenslanders face many challenges from increasingly severe and extreme weather events. This is an opportunity to reduce those impacts while also making insurance more affordable in their communities.

The program is expected to open for applications late this year with projects to be delivered by December 2023.

**Mr MADDEN:** With reference to the infrastructure and economic resilience strategy, policy and planning service area identified on page 7 of the Service Delivery Statements, can you outline how the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2032 will accelerate infrastructure in South-East Queensland to create jobs?

**Dr MILES:** Before I go to detailing the infrastructure pipeline in the lead-up to the games, I would like to advise the committee of a little known fact. Believe it or not, town planning was once an Olympic sport. At the Olympic Games between 1928 and 1948, medals for town planning were handed out at



Amsterdam, Los Angeles, Berlin and London. While it is too early to say what sports might be included in Brisbane 2032, I for one think it is time for town planning to make a comeback. Given their performance so far this year, I think the State Planner, Kerry Doss, would lead an excellent Olympics contingent in the town-planning event. I think there is no doubt they would be gold medal contenders.

With the boom in population in Queensland since the pandemic, our planners have been working very hard to unlock land supply and accelerate new infrastructure. The 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games mean a 10-year pipeline of construction industry jobs, trade and investment opportunities and legacy projects that will benefit all of Queensland for decades to come. It is because all three levels of government have realised the opportunity and worked together. It is also due to the fact that our unparalleled response to the COVID-19 pandemic has shored up our global reputation as a safe and welcoming destination. In fact, we are one of the few places in the world that did not need to shut down construction during the pandemic, and that has meant some big infrastructure projects will be completed on time and in time for the games—Cross River Rail and Queen's Wharf included.

Now we can align our longer term planning objectives with our games delivery while we supercharge our COVID-19 recovery efforts. This is a chance to shape the future of not only our capital city but also South-East Queensland as a region and the state as the fastest growing part of the country and deliver benefits across the whole of Queensland, indeed the nation. KPMG confirmed that the benefits of hosting the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics will be game changing, not just for the state but also nationally and not just for the economy but also the community. That analysis showed a \$8.1 billion total benefit for Queensland and a \$17.6 billion benefit for Australia, creating 91,600 Queensland full-time-equivalent job years as well as 122,900 nationally. It will have an uplift in international tourism and trade of an estimated \$4.6 billion for Queensland and \$8.5 billion nationally and social benefits of up to \$3.5 billion for Queensland and \$9.11 billion nationally in areas such as health, volunteering and community benefits. We will proudly implement a Queensland-first procurement policy, enabling local small and medium business to thrive and remain competitive, from the creation of temporary spectator seating and the establishment of temporary venues and sporting infrastructure to ensuring opportunities to showcase Queensland's best food and wine.

The IOC's new approach makes hosting a games more flexible and affordable. With more than 85 per cent of games venues existing or temporary, the ability to utilise existing infrastructure is there. Any new investments will be made to meet the longer term growth objectives of the state and deliver a lasting community legacy. Our plan for the longer term upgrade of the Gabba is about ensuring that a venue which has been home to sport in Queensland for 126 years can continue to deliver benefits for the visitor economy for decades to come.

Let us not forget the enormous sense of community pride that comes from an event like this—the chance to promote diversity and inclusion and inspire a future generation of athletes. It is exciting to think that today's children are gearing up to become our next generation of athletes who will have the chance to compete right here in Queensland in front of tens of thousands of home fans. I know that my daughter, Bridie, has not stopped practising her gymnastics since the announcement last week. She is very keen to be there. Whether she makes it into the final team or not, that enthusiasm and the health and wellbeing benefits of being active will not go to waste. There is nothing better than being an athlete and competing at home at the games. It is what dreams are made of.

I would like to acknowledge the fact that Brisbane's aspiration to host the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2032 was spearheaded initially by the Council of Mayors South-East Queensland. I would also like to acknowledge the federal government's commitment to a fifty-fifty funding approach to the delivery of critical games related infrastructure. I would especially like to acknowledge our Premier for her tireless work to make Brisbane 2032 a reality. Nobody is more passionate about our state, and that passion has helped make Brisbane one of the world's few Olympic cities.

**Mr SMITH:** Deputy Premier, with reference to the infrastructure and economic resilience strategy, policy and planning service area identified in the SDS, can you please explain to the committee how the Community Infrastructure Investment Partnership will benefit and create jobs in Queensland communities, particularly those hit hard by the social and economic impacts of COVID-19?

**Dr MILES:** As you know, Queensland's plan for economic recovery is well and truly underway, with billions of dollars worth of infrastructure being built as we speak. Our economic recovery needs to deliver for all Queenslanders, and the projects we build now will benefit Queenslanders for years to come. In February of this year I announced the \$8 million Community Infrastructure Investment Partnership grants program to accelerate Queensland's economic recovery by investing in social infrastructure for communities impacted by COVID-19. We invited not-for-profits from across

Queensland to apply for a share of around \$8 million in grants to improve infrastructure that was not fit for purpose due to the impacts of COVID-19. The response was overwhelming, with communities across Queensland jumping at the opportunity.

We received a strong response from organisations that provide critical social and job readiness services in many high-need communities. After assessing more than 70 submissions across regions, service types, project readiness and value for money, funding has been allocated to a number of organisations for a mix of refurbishments and rebuilds. Today I am happy to announce the first batch of four recipients. I will announce others in coming weeks. From Yarrabah and Cairns in Far North Queensland to Ipswich, these five projects will support the expansion of social services and employment readiness programs and deliver immediate economic recovery and community health and wellbeing benefits.

In Yarrabah, the Gindjara Treatment & Healing Indigenous Corporations will construct a fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate permanent building to deliver learning and wellbeing centred programs and services in Cairns. ARC Disability Services will develop a purpose-built place based services community hub supporting people with disabilities within the southern corridor of Cairns. In Tully, the Tully Support Centre Inc. will construct a community training, activities and development space to enhance general neighbourhood centre services and skills development programs. In Ipswich, Y-Care South-East Queensland will refurbish a former aged-care facility making it fit for purpose as a youth centre.

The member will be pleased to hear that I will be announcing other recipients shortly and that we will continue to work with local organisations to build resilient communities by supporting improved social infrastructure and services. We will continue to work with local organisations to build resilient communities by supporting improved social infrastructure and services as part of our COVID-19 recovery effort. Most importantly, all these projects will create jobs.

We are committed to supporting and promoting active participation for all members of our communities now and beyond the pandemic. On top of the CIIP, another \$7 million of funding has been allocated towards the delivery of a unite and recover flagship initiative: the Access Economic Hub in Logan. This project aims to provide a range of employment readiness, job training, social enterprise and business incubator services and link participants to complementary and existing social services. Our government invests in social services because we know that investing in Queenslanders builds a better Queensland as much as any other type of physical infrastructure.

**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, sorry I did not get back to you before for your question. I will go to you first, member for Traeger.

**Mr KATTER:** Deputy Premier, your department obviously relies on advice and forecasts for the North West Minerals Province for planning and investment. Do you expect increasing global demand for minerals to result in increased royalties for development in the north-west over the next 20 years?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for his question. We are very committed to working with industry to see the North West Minerals Province develop. We know that many of the minerals of the future are in the north-west and we want to see them unlocked. That is why we delivered a \$39 million strategic blueprint for the province and a \$33 million North West Queensland Economic Diversification Strategy, which we released in 2019. Together they have facilitated already \$2.3 billion in investment and 1,700 ongoing jobs since 2017.

There are enormous opportunities with those minerals. I think the focus should be on not just what we need to do to enable those developments but also what we can do to see those minerals processed and fed into supply chains for local manufacturing as much as possible, rather than simply digging them up here and exporting them. That is where State Development has a much greater role to play. While there are planning and coordination roles in the agency, the resources elements largely rest with other agencies. What we are working on is attracting the industries that can value add and create even more jobs here.

**Mr KATTER:** They are all very welcome comments. Thank you, Deputy Premier. Could you come back to the forecast? Could you give us any advice or what are you aware of? It is pretty important going forward.

**Dr MILES:** The member would be aware of the various modelling about the potential value there. I am not aware of any modelling in my agency of what that value translates to in terms of royalties, although obviously there is a flow on there. If that work has been done in government, it would have been done in Treasury.

**Mr KATTER:** The gas industry has impacted a lot in my electorate and it has impacted development throughout the state. There is a surplus now of LNG train infrastructure. I think that is common knowledge. There was much lower than expected royalties from the gas industry. There are soaring prices and in some cases a lack or unavailability of supply contracts. Will the government now acknowledge that there was policy failure in not having an effective gas reserve policy statewide?

**CHAIR:** To rephrase, was that question about gas infrastructure?

**Mr KATTER:** I will have another go. There have been some inefficiencies with the roll-out of the gas industry. The surplus of infrastructure with LNG trains has created dysfunction. It has impacted development around the state and it has impacted infrastructure, I would argue, through lack of a gas reserve policy. I acknowledge the government has one, but it is not a statewide one.

**CHAIR:** I appreciate that you went to some length explaining that. Obviously it touches on infrastructure and planning. I do not even know if this question has gone to the right section, but can someone at the table furnish an answer?

**Dr MILES:** I am happy to address it in general terms, although it is probably best directed to the Minister for Resources. Since the emergence of the problems that the member highlights—which is largely the cost of gas now that it is priced on the global market rather than just on the domestic market, as well as accessibility of gas having to compete with producers globally not just domestically—some industries have been challenged with both the price of gas and sheer accessibility.

The state government's gas action plan is designed to address that, as is the issuing of domestic-only permits, which I understand former minister Lyneham commenced. I met recently with proponents who are successfully delivering that gas direct to Queensland industry. They are the key levers that we are using at the moment.

Equally, as we develop the next gas industry—which we think will be hydrogen—we are working to ensure wherever possible that we deliver energy to industry here first so that we are manufacturing here and also that we play a coordination role to deliver common user infrastructure and avoiding the kinds of inefficiencies that the member has pointed to with the simultaneous parallel construction of three trains. Obviously in future there would be potential economic efficiencies if we can get proponents to work together through fee for service or other common user vehicles.

**CHAIR:** We will go to other non-government questions. Member for Lockyer, do you have a question?

**Mr McDONALD:** I defer to the member for Maroochydore.

**Ms SIMPSON:** I would like to follow up from the question I asked before which was answered by Mr Doss in respect to Caballo. I reference a significant delay in a development due to a dispute between DTMR and Urban Utilities. The water minister's office has admitted that there were other projects that were delayed because of those disagreements with DTMR and Urban Utilities. How many projects have been delayed, what are the name of the projects and what is the length of the delay?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maroochydore, that is a fairly extensive question. You have talked about delays. You have talked about disputes et cetera. In helping to clarify this for the minister, you are asking about specific projects that have been delayed and the length of delay?

**Ms SIMPSON:** If it helps the chair and the minister, there is a letter from the water minister's office that we could table that indicates there were other projects that were also delayed.

**CHAIR:** We will have a look at this. Member for Maroochydore, you are chasing this up with the appropriate minister later on.

**Ms SIMPSON:** With respect, Chair, it actually is to do with planning.

**CHAIR:** I had not finished. Obviously that is something that may well happen later. I am trying to help the minister come to some answers on what is a fairly long and extensive question.

**Mr McDONALD:** I raise a point of order, Chair. The minister is capable of answering that. He does not need your—

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your opinion, member for Lockyer. I am still the chair here. I was just about to say, if the minister could furnish some enlightenment for that—feel free to use a broad brush or give any brief details that you can on that. I still think that this question should have gone to the Minister for Water.

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for the question. I thank the chair for chance to address it. It is a difficult question to answer. I am advised that with regard to the Caballo Park Estate that the member mentioned, DTMR construction approval has now been granted and full construction of the required

water main by the applicant commenced on 28 June 2021. The questions about whether we know of other projects that have similar delays probably need to be either addressed to the water minister or, if the member wants to raise specific projects, we can look into those and provide advice to her.

**Ms SIMPSON:** If I could help the minister, this concerns disputes between jurisdictions. Mr Doss outlined some interim steps to address that with DTMR. My question to the minister is in relation to coordinating and resolving those disputes between agencies which are causing blowouts in release of land which would in turn relieve some of the pressure on house supply. Are there other projects known to the planning minister? What is the length of delays and can the minister give some indication in respect of that?

**Dr MILES:** I am happy, Chair, to call upon the State Planner again to outline to the extent that we can—obviously some of these matters are not yet announced or are commercial in confidence—what projects we are working on to try to relieve those kinds of delays, if that is useful for the member, and the kind of systematic approach that he and his team are taking to addressing those as they come up, because it is very much a focus of our efforts.

I would also note that in a lot of cases delays can be in the differing aspirations of landholders in an area. The need to get developers working together and timing their projects in a way that suits the infrastructure delivery and the opening up of land can also be a cause of delay, particularly in areas where all of the easy-to-develop areas have been developed and we are needing to get into that harder work. If the member is happy for me to call the state planner up, I am very happy for him to talk to the specifics.

**Mr Doss:** I thank the honourable member for her question. I would say that it is difficult to get a gauge on matters such as connections for water and sewerage. In terms of the development assessment process, the state often only becomes involved when there is a state trigger that requires the state to look at interests. That might be things like state controlled roads and the like. A subdivision application is generally assessed by the local government authority, and it is referred to the state government where there is a matter of state interest.

Where it comes to state government, that application is coordinated by the State Assessment and Referral Agency, which sits inside Planning Group. The State Assessment and Referral Agency then feeds out that application to the relevant technical agencies across government, which might include Transport and Main Roads and the like, and we get their responses back on how those state interests should be addressed and if there are any questions or any conditions to go on top of that. We then within the SARA team reconcile any differences between the conditions that are set by state government agencies, so we perform that triage process and that reconciliation process. We have played that role for a number of years. It is one of the most successful systems running in Australia.

In terms of connections for water and sewerage, what happens at the subdivision application stage is that there is an assessment done on the capacity of the water and sewer systems in that area to deal with that application. If there are upgrades required, they are often conditioned on that development application, but it requires a subsequent application for operational works to be submitted to the water utility provider. Within South-East Queensland there are a number of entities that provide water across the system. I could not tell you those off the top of my head. I know that the one in question we are talking about is Urban Utilities. We do not actually see those applications for operational works; they go directly to Urban Utilities. It becomes quite complex.

In the case we are talking about, there is a requirement on the developer to build water infrastructure, I understand, within a Transport and Main Roads state controlled corridor. You would appreciate that you have a private contractor who would be delivering water infrastructure in a Main Roads corridor, and there are risks and issues associated with that. Transport and Main Roads is the property owner and has to provide that information. Where this matter became known to us, we have stepped in. The water minister, Transport and Main Roads and Urban Utilities have had a meeting. That has put in place an interim short-term measure and they are looking at longer term regulatory measures to fix that up.

In terms of the Growth Areas Team, we are looking at a range of issues that affect land supply in South-East Queensland. Some of those have been, for example, systemic problems within the system and ironing those out. We have quite a broad remit to look at issues and we will reach out across departments. We will reach out across to Transport and Main Roads and other areas. Often when it comes down to the detailed design of infrastructure such as water and sewer, such as roads, we do not actually know there are operational works applications in the system. They tend to go straight to areas like Urban Utilities to look at that and make sure it meets with their standards.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you very much; I appreciate your answer. Just to follow on from that, could you clarify the interaction between SARA and the Growth Areas Team?

**Mr Doss:** At the present time when applications still come into SARA they are looked at there, but if there is a specific growth area we are looking at in South-East Queensland the Growth Areas Team will assist the SARA team in coordinating and dealing with issues in that area.

**Ms SIMPSON:** Thank you, Mr Doss. Deputy Premier, my question is with regard to the EDQ. I understand there are some draft increases in the infrastructure charges in the Ipswich and Logan PDAs that will impact substantially on the cost per lot. Is the minister aware what the increased costs are per lot that are flagged by EDQ?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for the question. I am aware of ongoing discussions between the state and developers in the Ripley Valley and Greater Flagstone priority development areas to ensure we have sufficient and appropriate infrastructure to meet the needs of those communities. Those final charges are not yet settled and are subject to ongoing consultation and negotiation with those developers, in particular with the education department.

I am sure the member agrees that it is absolutely critical that these big new communities have sufficient schools to deliver education to the growing families that are moving there. I speak from some experience, because the community I represent has insufficient schools. The primary school that two of my kids go to is projected to hit 1,800 students in the next few years because there was not enough land—the member for Bancroft will know this, too—allocated for schools. I feel very strongly about us ensuring early in the planning process that there is sufficient land held for schools, because it is very difficult to retrofit schools into these communities. If they get those population projections wrong, we are spending tens of millions of dollars building three- and four-storey classrooms in suburban areas where, if the planning had been right, we could have had an additional school of a size that is more manageable for the kids, teachers and principals.

**Ms SIMPSON:** With regard to education and the point about the cost of infrastructure delivery, there has been some concern that education is left too late and by the time infrastructure impacts are considered it is a lot more expensive to deal with that. Are there any moves afoot to ensure that the scoping of education needs is done earlier in the process so there is less likelihood of a spike in infrastructure charges and costs?

**Dr MILES:** That is exactly what we are trying to do here. What we are trying to do in the other growth areas is get certainty of population—it is not simple; I accept it is complex—as early as possible, assessing how many kids there will be and therefore how many schools they will need, where they will need to be, what kinds of roads there will need to be to service them and making sure buses can run up them. All of that level of detail is exactly why it is important that we have better coordination, that we bring those state agencies to the table earlier in the development process. In doing so, I think we can give more certainty to developers not only about what they will need to pay and what land will need to be held aside but also about what they can market as part of their developments. These are big taxpayer investments that then become part of the glossy brochure for the estate the developer wants to sell.

I think everyone has an interest in us getting this right. I am not of the view that either the previous proposal or the current proposal necessarily is where we should land, so there is an ongoing discussion in this case. The circumstances we find ourselves in with Ripley Valley and Greater Flagstone will inform how we try to do it better in Caboolture West and the other growth areas we are focused on.

**CHAIR:** Deputy Premier, what you have described is negotiations where you have council, Education Queensland, developers and your department in terms of determining or setting infrastructure charges.

**Dr MILES:** And Main Roads and utilities and all of the others. It is not uncomplicated, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** It is indeed complicated. Deputy Premier, with reference to the 'Better Planning for Queensland' service area as identified on page 9 of the SDS, can you detail how you are supporting the delivery of dedicated training facilities to ensure Queenslanders have the skills necessary for those jobs that are emerging, such as in renewables?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for his question. I know this is one he will be interested in. Skills and training is a key component of Queensland's economic recovery plan and the best way we can help Queenslanders get jobs is by providing them with in demand skills for good, secure jobs. This month I approved a Ministerial Infrastructure Designation for the Pinkenba Renewable Energy Training Facility. This state-of-the-art facility, which is worth \$23 million, will be constructed and operated by

Electrogroup Training. It will accommodate 300 students and 40 staff and will provide world-class training in the renewable energy sector for thousands of Queenslanders each year, while creating more than 40 jobs during construction.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to accelerating growth in the renewable energy sector in Queensland and providing Queenslanders with the skills they need for jobs now and into the future. That is why the Palaszczuk government invested \$17 million towards the new renewable energy training facility in Pinkenba. This investment was matched with an industry contribution of \$6 million.

The training facility is just one example of how effective planning and targeted incentives by the Palaszczuk government is providing Queenslanders with the skills they need for jobs now and into the future. Queensland is growing and changing, and to support that growth we need to have the right training infrastructure in the right places.

**Mr MADDEN:** Deputy Premier, with reference to the 'Better Planning for Queensland' service area identified on page 9 of the Service Delivery Statement, can you update the committee on the progress on the Dunwich (Goompi) Master Plan and how the Palaszczuk government is assisting North Stradbroke Island's traditional owners' aspirations to create homes and jobs on the island?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for his question. There is no doubt that Minjerribah, known affectionately by many of us as Straddie, is a place of enormous significance to the Quandamooka people as well as being one of the jewels in the crown of the Queensland tourism industry. This government is committed to ensuring that the island's future is bright and that the traditional owners are assisted in their aspirations.

Through the Goompi draft master plan, we are providing a blueprint to guide future residential, commercial, community, environmental and industrial land opportunities in and around Goompi, which is the traditional name for Dunwich. Today we are opening consultation on the draft master plan through to Friday, 3 September. I am calling on residents to get involved and play a part in helping decide the future growth and prosperity of their community. The draft master plan is one of 23 Queensland government initiatives under the Minjerribah Futures program which aims to diversify and expand the island's economy as we put sandmining on the island well and truly behind us.

Additionally, I am directing Redland City Council to amend its planning scheme to provide future economic, social, cultural and housing certainty for the Quandamooka people on Minjerribah. Changes to the planning scheme are to reflect a temporary local planning instrument that was made in September last year. In recognition of the Quandamooka people's native title rights, we made the TLPI in relation to 25 parcels of land to help create jobs and homes on Quandamooka country. The TLPI also establishes bushfire protection provisions in the form of asset protection buffers. These buffers are to mitigate the risk of bushfires on any future development over the 25 land parcels. My direction to council will ensure that the changes to the planning scheme occur prior to the TLPI expiring. This government is committed to the long-term future of Minjerribah, its traditional owners, its residents and the thousands of visitors who see it as one of Queensland's most beautiful places to visit.

**CHAIR:** I have a brief question, and this is in reference to Economic Development Queensland on page 20 of the SDS. Can you give us an update on our election commitment to declare North Harbour a PDA in the electorate of Bancroft and how that will create jobs in the Moreton Bay electorate?

**Dr MILES:** I see what you did there, member for Bancroft.

**CHAIR:** It is important for all of the state.

**Dr MILES:** It is important for all of us. As you know, the Palaszczuk government made an election commitment in 2020 to declare the North Harbour priority development area in the seat of Bancroft. This has the full support of the Moreton Bay Regional Council. The proposed marina and canal estate development is expected to deliver around 1,600 residential lots and 300 apartments, 400 marina berths, as well as industry, retail, tourism, hotel and entertainment uses. According to the Moreton Bay Regional Council, the development will generate over \$100 million to the local economy each year during construction. It will also generate around 7,000 construction jobs, with more than 800 ongoing indirect jobs during the 10-year construction phase.

Economic Development Queensland in my department has been working with the council to finalise a work plan and prepare for the declaration of a priority development area. The proponent is working with the Commonwealth government and the council on an approvals pathway, which includes an assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. This work

by my department and by the proponent is important to ensure we deliver an economically and environmentally sustainable development for the Moreton Bay community. I look forward to continuing our work with the Moreton Bay Regional Council and indeed the member for Bancroft to grow jobs in our community.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I am going to go to the member for Maiwar who has a question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thanks very much, Chair. I appreciate the chance to ask one question at least. Now that Brisbane has been confirmed as the host city for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we are very likely to see significant upzoning of land that will increase that land value and generate significant profits for developers and speculators, without contributing necessarily any additional funding for public infrastructure. My question is to the director-general. Against that backdrop, has the government conducted any modelling or analysis of the potential for a levy on those kinds of land value gains made by developers, similar to the one recently announced by the Victorian government and already in place in the ACT?

**CHAIR:** Bear with us a moment on that. Certainly that was a lengthy question and you do have a hypothetical in asking for an opinion on this. Member for Maiwar, I noticed you said in the media the other day that you wanted to drill down into the detail of how the government is spending our money. We are looking at appropriations for this year, and I would suggest that certainly that question of a hypothetical levy or whatever is outside what we are looking at here today. Did you want to recast that question?

**Mr BERKMAN:** Has the government conducted any modelling or analysis? That is the question. Have you conducted any modelling or analysis of the potential for a levy, similar to the one that has recently been announced in Victoria and the one already in place in the ACT?

**CHAIR:** I think the part we can take from that is about modelling. The rest of it would be outside the standing orders.

**Mr Walker:** In terms of modelling, I am not aware of anything within our department with regard to the 2032 games opportunity. I must say though it is 11 years away and we have got quite a bit of work to do to start to deliver on the conceptual plans that were put forward as part of the bid itself. We always, as part of advice to government, will consider a variety of options, and things like a levy are very much a policy decision of government. There have been things done over time that do seek to achieve uplift, and I can only think of the priority development areas and the precincts around Cross River Rail itself. There is an opportunity there for government to certainly start to see and reap some of those opportunities. Again, when planning is done, options will be put to government in due course.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Just a follow-on if I may to the Deputy Premier, taking the policy component of that question. I have put this question to you last year and I recall your response, but I am interested in whether the government is seriously considering that broader kind of uplift value levy to reflect what is being done in Victoria and the ACT.

**CHAIR:** Take a broadbrush approach to that question. Once again I note, member, that I have told you to talk about the estimates currently in front of us. However, I am going to let the Deputy Premier talk broadly about planning necessities for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

**Dr MILES:** Clearly, it is going to be an ongoing conversation that we will be having over time and other jurisdictions will also be having the conversation. We have talked a bit in the hearing so far about infrastructure charging. That is one way we ensure developments contribute to the cost of infrastructure.

The point the director-general makes I think is a critical one with regard to the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Due to our foresight with the Cross River Rail development and the protection of those precincts and the retention of the state's ownership and power over the development of those precincts, the parts of the city that will benefit the most from the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games investments are likely to capture that value uplift in the precincts themselves. That is if you think about Bowen Hills-Roma Street, where there is likely to be a new arena and the Gabba station through to the Gabba stadium. Queenslanders will benefit very significantly from the uplift in value of those precincts by the delivery of rail, the redevelopment of the precincts and the investment in Olympic and Paralympic venues in those locations. We are certainly very focused on working with the CRRDA to ensure that those benefits are fully realised. That is where the focus of those conversations has been thus far. No doubt there will be ongoing discussions about what other areas will benefit from these investments.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, I am sure the member for South Brisbane would love to ask a question.

**CHAIR:** Sure. Member for South Brisbane, do you have a question?

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the director-general. Elders and custodians at Deebing Creek have been calling for a halt to development within the PDA to protect land there, and developers have indicated a willingness to engage in a land sale with the government. Has the department investigated the benefits of a land swap, and has the department considered the human rights implications of the development approved under priority development area legislation?

**Mr Walker:** One point to make up-front around Deebing Creek and in particular this PDA is that the assessment authority is, in fact, Ipswich City Council. The Queensland government is committed to protecting cultural significance and values in the Ripley Valley priority development area. It is for this reason that the Ripley Valley PDA development scheme includes development requirements and mapping to protect culturally significant places and items. Land at Deebing Creek is associated with the Deebing Creek Mission, a heritage-listed former Aboriginal reserve located in the priority development area. In recognition of this, the Deebing Creek Aboriginal cemetery reserve, the connecting lineal corridor and the former Deebing Creek Mission were listed on the Queensland Heritage Register in 2004 and are protected as a state heritage place. The cemetery is owned by the state government and no development is intended over this area.

In the preparation of the priority development area development scheme, requirements were included to manage development and seek a balance to create new suburban neighbourhoods while retaining and protecting important areas of significance. As I mentioned, Ipswich City Council is currently assessing a development application which includes the former Deebing Creek Mission site in the south-west corner of the subject land, and the portion of the land within the state heritage place will be retained as a heritage park in recognition of the site's cultural significance. The application proposes a network of cultural heritage trails and installations within the Deebing Creek corridor park and cultural heritage areas to promote Indigenous recognition, and a heritage impact statement was prepared to support this application.

The developers have the necessary federal, state and local government approvals and cultural heritage agreement in place to undertake their residential developments. In addition, cultural heritage management plans have been prepared in conjunction with the Jagera and Ugarapul people as the traditional owners of the land and approved by DATSIP. There are also protections in the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003 and the Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003, both of which have duty-of-care obligations requiring a person to exercise due diligence and take reasonable precautions before undertaking an activity that may harm Indigenous cultural heritage.

**Dr MacMAHON:** To confirm, there has been no discussion about land that the developers have indicated they would be willing to discuss with the government?


**Mr Walker:** At this point in time we are allowing the process to play out via the application with Ipswich City Council.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of the estimates—

**Mr McDONALD:** Before we close, the member for Burleigh made a statement earlier referring to best practice principles. I table that.

**CHAIR:** It is so tabled. The time allocated for the consideration of estimates expenditure in the portfolio areas of infrastructure and planning has expired. We have no questions on notice. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and we will resume at 11.30 am.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.15 am to 11.31 am.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back Deputy Premier and officials. The committee will now consider the local government area of the portfolio until 12.30 pm. Deputy Premier, if you wish, you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

**Dr MILES:** Thank you, Chair. In keeping Queenslanders safe and creating jobs, our councils, our local governments, have done a great job. The leadership they have shown since the start of the pandemic has been outstanding, particularly considering that many mayors and councillors were only elected for the first time in March last year. The partnership this government has developed with the local government sector continues to strengthen as we implement our economic recovery plan. With our population surging, it has never been more important to ensure our regional economies grow and that we continue to create jobs where they are needed most. The \$1 billion Works for Queensland program has been a boon for our councils. It is helping them deliver community infrastructure and improved livability right across regional Queensland. Incredibly, by the end of the current funding round in June 2024, it is expected that Works for Queensland will have supported, sustained or created more than 25,000 jobs in regional Queensland. It is a fantastic result for local businesses, local tradies and of course local families.



The Palaszczuk government also committed \$200 million over six years to the South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program at the 2020 state election. The 2021-24 South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program is providing \$100 million to support the 12 councils in South-East Queensland to fast-track new infrastructure and community assets, helping to create and sustain jobs. A total of 113 projects have been approved. Councils estimate that around 1,455 jobs will be created or supported across South-East Queensland. Additionally, the Building Our Regions program has approved funding towards 271 projects, supporting an estimated 2,770 jobs during construction across regional Queensland. These projects have attracted additional investment of over \$539 million from local governments and other organisations. We have allocated a further \$70 million to this program through the recent state budget and yet we are very much aware of how the COVID environment has made financial sustainability even more of a challenge for our councils. We are looking to gain a better understanding of financial positions as well as to ascertain what assistance the state might be able to provide going forward.

The government will continue with training programs aimed at improving financial management and continue with funding programs such as Works for Queensland. This government believes strongly in collaboration as the best way to achieve results for communities across the state. Of course, we know that local representatives often know the specific needs of each of our Queensland communities. When we get it right together, local families and local communities benefit from stronger economies, increased opportunities, greater livability and more jobs in towns and cities throughout Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Member for Lockyer.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will hand over to the member for Warrego, the shadow minister for Local Government.

**Ms LEAHY:** My first question is to the minister. Given the advanced waste payments cease after this budget, can the minister give a commitment that the subsidy will continue at this level, or will householders be subjected to a rubbish bin tax?

**Mr MADDEN:** Where is that in the Service Delivery Statements?

**CHAIR:** The member for Ipswich West asked about the Service Delivery Statements. It is technically an opinion about what might be in future budgets, but we are examining the current budget.

**Dr MILES:** The waste levy is not part of my portfolio responsibilities or mentioned in the SDS.

**Ms LEAHY:** It is mentioned in the Budget Strategy and Outlook, page 135.

**Mr MADDEN:** It has to be in one of these.

**CHAIR:** Not quite sure. The budget strategy is not in the SDS. Is that part of the budget pack?

**Mr HART:** Yes, it is.

**CHAIR:** I am not sure if this is once again in the area of responsibility covered by the Deputy Premier. Sorry, member for Lockyer?

**Mr McDONALD:** It has a direct impact on local government and it is a part of the budget papers.

**CHAIR:** I understand that it is quite well part of the budget papers, but I am not sure. I understand you are saying it may have an impact on local governments theoretically.

**Mr HART:** If they don't have the money, it will have a real impact.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I am not sure if you can furnish any further enlightenment on that one, Deputy Premier?

**Dr MILES:** I am happy to talk in general terms.

**CHAIR:** Just briefly and perhaps broadly.

**Dr MILES:** I emphasise that the waste levy is not part of my portfolio responsibilities, nor the budget that we are discussing here. Just because it appears in other budget papers does not make it relevant to the committee's hearings. The committee's hearings relate to my portfolio responsibilities and to my budget.

**Mr HART:** It is money paid to local government, surely that is your responsibility.

**CHAIR:** Order, member!

**Dr MILES:** I can however advise the committee that the Palaszczuk government is committed to no impact on households from the waste levy. The government will continue to work with councils and their stakeholders while also listening to Queenslanders. We will continue to provide support to councils through measures like our signature \$1 billion Works for Queensland program. It is helping councils build job-creating infrastructure, benefitting the whole community. The Palaszczuk government is

investing a record \$1.4 billion in this budget to protect our environment, reduce waste and create jobs. The levy is an important measure to help encourage waste avoidance, increase recycling and resource recovery and reduce waste disposal to landfill while providing a funding stream to enable better resource recovery and recycling.

The government has committed to ensuring that 70 per cent of the proceeds from the waste levy will be used for resource recovery and other programs that reduce the impact of waste and protect the environment and local communities. We always said from the time that the waste levy was introduced that the rebate arrangements would be reviewed in 2021-22, and that is precisely what is envisaged in the budget. What I have said to local governments that have raised this matter with me and to the LGAQ is that that review arrangement is sincere. The intention is still very much to ensure that households are protected from the impost of the levy while also ensuring that the settings are right to continue to drive a reduction in waste to landfill.

**Mr HART:** So you did have a prepared answer?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Burleigh. You will get a chance for questions later if you so desire. Member for Warrego?

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, is this the last year that advance payments will be made to councils?

**Dr MILES:** No, it is the year that the waste levy legislation envisaged a review of those arrangements. That is why that review is occurring and it is what the budget foreshadows.

**Ms LEAHY:** What is the consultation model that councils can expect from the government in the next 12 months regarding the review of the waste payments? What is the consultation model going to look like?

**Dr MILES:** Chair, now they are very much getting into the detail. I think I have been pretty good in answering questions that are not relevant to the committee's hearings.

**Mr HART:** You had a prepared answer!

**Dr MILES:** I am more prepared for a lot of things, member for Burleigh!

**Mr HART:** Minister for local government; it is your area.

**CHAIR:** One moment, please, member for Burleigh. Welcome back to the table.

**Dr MILES:** He got a seat finally!

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. If members have questions, please line up for questions, but no interjections and no quarrelling. Standing order 246 provides for no quarrelling across the chamber, thank you very much. Member for Warrego, the Deputy Premier has answered the question, especially if we look at 181(g) in terms of responsibility for expenditure. Do you have another question?

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you, Chair. I will move on. My next question is to the director-general, Damien Walker. I refer to the Maranoa Regional Council, where nine of the 10 councillors sell cattle through the council owned cattle saleyards. What advice do you have for the one councillor left in the room making decisions to upgrade the saleyards?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** The member for Bundaberg has raised a point of order. That very clearly asks for an opinion. That is reliant on so many other pieces of information being furnished to give that particular opinion. What you are asking about, as you did last year, is a conflict-of-interest scenario for local government.

**Mr McDONALD:** The question was asking the director-general for the advice to a councillor. Surely the director-general can answer that.

**CHAIR:** I can rule it out of order. You cannot ask for an opinion when you are not in full grasp of all the facts in this particular case.

**Mr HART:** This is a fact; this is happening.

**Mr McDONALD:** I would suggest that the director-general would have awareness of it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. It is a fact. You have made a statement. We are not aware if this is a fact or not. I am helping you out here. I can either rule it out of order or ask the director-general to talk in general terms about the conflict-of-interest regime in local government.

**Mr HART:** Chair, just because you are not aware of this instance happening does not mean it is not happening and does not mean we should not ask questions about it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your advice, member for Burleigh. Certainly, if we are examining estimates we do need some verification. I have helped you out a couple of times now, and I will do it again.

**Mr HART:** I could get the councillors on the phone.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, I am trying to help you here.

**Mr HART:** I do not need any help from you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I think you do. Director-General, can you enlighten us about this situation?

**Mr Walker:** What I can say is that there is significant expertise within the department at the ready to provide advice to councils around conflict-of-interest matters. In terms of my ability today to provide a detailed piece of advice around this particular matter, I would need more information. What I am going to do is make sure the committee understands that there is a local government division within the department with significant expertise at the ready to provide such advice if and when it is required.

**Ms LEAHY:** Director-General, through my regular engagement with the sector I have learned that councillors have ceased including bereavement cards with flowers because they are unsure if this needs to be recorded on gift registers. It is a fairly simple question. It is a quite personal matter for these councillors. Should these councillors be declaring bereavement flowers as gifts?

**Mr Walker:** Again, there is significant expertise within the department that can certainly provide advice. What I would say is that there will be, and there continues to be, a proactive piece of work by us to get out to councils and ensure that councillors understand what a conflict of interest is and, most importantly, what is not. To the extent that we can provide that clarity, we will endeavour to do so. Again, we will roll that out in this coming financial year in such a way that I trust these questions are resolved locally.

**Ms LEAHY:** Director-General, councillors have raised concerns about small gifts of produce, for instance a bag of lemons from a neighbour. What would be the advice from the director-general to these councillors? Is it the lemons that are causing the problem or is there a bit of lemon legislation involved?

**CHAIR:** I am going to rule that out of order, because it is a repeat of a previous question.

**Mr HART:** One was about flowers; one was about lemons. They are two different things.

**CHAIR:** I am just ruling it out of order. I will not go further than that. Do you have another question, member for Warrego?

**Ms LEAHY:** Yes, thank you, Mr Chair. Minister, given we have some absurd examples that are occurring in real life, do you agree that the government's conflict-of-interest laws are stopping elected members from doing the job they were elected to do for their communities?

**CHAIR:** Member, there are a few things going through my mind here. You have tripped up on the word 'absurd'. We went down the same path last year. I am on the point of ruling that question out of order, but I am going to let the Deputy Premier attempt to answer this question.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: the issue of imputation has to be in relation to a member or a minister, not in regard to government policy.

**CHAIR:** Yes, you are absolutely correct. That is only one way that we could argue that particular question breached standing orders, but I am allowing the Deputy Premier to answer that in the manner in which he sees fit.

**Dr MILES:** Thank you, Chair. I do agree that the examples the member continues to bring to this committee are absurd. There are clear processes available for councils to receive advice. That process is not to forward it to the member for Warrego to ask us here at estimates. Rather, that process is to seek advice directly from that department, which will provide that advice to them.

With regard to the first example that the member provided, where there are too many councillors conflicted on a matter to allow it to be dealt with they have the option of delegating to the CEO or, if they are unable to delegate, seeking approval from the minister for conflicted councillors to stay in the room.

Without knowing the specifics of the granting of lemons that the member referred to, it is generally the case that personal gifts are not considered, but the specifics of the circumstances would need to be considered. That, of course, goes to all of these circumstances. We all, in our roles, have a responsibility to manage conflicts of interest and we all do that. We saw earlier today how questions about conflicts of interest can be appropriately managed when the member for Maroochydore raised a concern with regard to your union membership, Mr Chair. All we are asking councillors to do is manage their conflicts in exactly the same way as we do, as the member for Burleigh does with his brewery—as all of us manage in our day-to-day work.

We remain committed to ensuring transparency and accountability in decision-making in councils—something that was brought into question in the last term of government and something that we acted on. Queenslanders expect and deserve government that is transparent and accountable. It is on these very foundations that all good governments are built. I am pleased that Queenslanders have supported our reforms by voting in favour of stronger integrity measures at repeated state elections. The reforms we have implemented in relation to managing councillors' conflicts of interest are an important part of that process.

My department recently undertook a project which analysed the operations of the new councillor complaints framework to make sure it is working smoothly and effectively. That analysis resulted in six recommendations, including streamlining the interactions between the department, the Office of the Independent Assessor and the Councillor Conduct Tribunal. The department has also looked at the training support provided to councillors and considered ways to improve clarity for councillors around the conflict-of-interest framework. This was in response to feedback from the LGAQ and Brisbane City Council, among others, about how this framework is operating in practice. I thank the LGAQ and in particular the Lord Mayor for the constructive way they have worked with us to improve these arrangements. We want to ensure decision-making is not hindered by any confusion around potential conflicts of interest.

The department will work closely with stakeholders to implement improvements that will assist councillors across Queensland. This includes streamlining the process of declaring conflicts of interest, clarifying when a councillor can and cannot participate in decision-making and clarifying how the conflict-of-interest framework—including the definition of 'related party'—applies in small council settings.

We will keep working with key stakeholders, including the LGAQ, to continue to look at ways of improving the system. It is absolutely critical that we defend the system. It is critical that all levels of government appropriately manage conflicts of interest. We have seen what can go wrong when they are not appropriately managed.

**Mr McDONALD:** I raise a point of order. Given the Deputy Premier admitted that lemons are allowed in this legislation, perhaps the previous question from the shadow minister should be allowed.

**CHAIR:** No. Is there another question?

**Ms LEAHY:** Minister, I am pleased you talked about how people should manage their conflicts of interest. Director-General, could you inform the committee whether a mayor or councillor with a membership of an organisation in a similar situation to the committee chair would have to declare and remove themselves from a council meeting?

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, you have advanced a lot of hearsay and hypotheticals without verification, but this one particularly is a hypothetical. Can you be more specific? If we are examining the expenditure before us here, can you be more specific instead of advancing a hypothetical?

**Mr HART:** I raise a point of order. This is about a discussion that was had in this very committee this morning, so it is not hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** No, it is not, member for Burleigh. This is about local government.

**Mr HART:** It was discussed here this morning.

**CHAIR:** This is about a hypothetical situation involving a mayor or a councillor of local government. Member for Warrego, would you like to recast or perhaps be more specific?

**Ms LEAHY:** Thank you, Mr Chair. What if the mayor or councillor was a member of a show society? Would they have to declare and remove themselves from a council meeting if there was discussion in council in relation to the running of that show society or funding to that show society? They would have to declare their interest.

**Mr Walker:** Member for Warrego, I think, as per my previous answers, it would very much rely on the detail. Notwithstanding that you have drawn out a few bits of information, we would certainly need a lot more and, again, I am a little reluctant in an estimates hearing about the budget to start talking about what a mayor may or may not need to do with regard to a membership of a show society, but what I am not aware of is precisely what they are considering in the chamber. Some more detail would be helpful and I am more than happy to again use the expertise of the department to provide that advice. If this is indeed something that is currently on foot and the mayor does need some advice, we would be more than happy to provide that.

**CHAIR:** One more question, member for Warrego.

**Ms LEAHY:** My next question is to the director-general. Is the director-general aware of the \$631,000 of unpaid cost shifts on to councils for the state government border closures and that half of this amount is on one council?

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, do you have some verification for that?

**Ms LEAHY:** The SDS at page 5 relating to capital grants.

**CHAIR:** No, verification for the claims that you have just made. We need to have more information.

**Mr HART:** The director-general has a briefing on it.

**Ms LEAHY:** I understand that there is correspondence from a council to the Premier.

**Mr SMITH:** This is not the Premier; this is the Deputy Premier.

**CHAIR:** Correspondence to the Premier? We have not seen a copy of that, so—

**Ms LEAHY:** I actually have a copy here, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Let us have a look at that.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will table that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Let us have a look at that. It is from the Paroo Shire Council. I think the Deputy Premier probably needs to see this, so it is correspondence to the Deputy Premier. Are you happy to—

**Dr MILES:** Chair, the question was addressed to the director-general. I am happy to answer it if the member would like to direct it to me.

**CHAIR:** Yes, okay. Could someone at the table opposite furnish us with some clarification on this particular issue?

**Dr MILES:** If the member is happy for me to answer?

**Ms LEAHY:** Yes, I am happy for you to answer.

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for the question and thank you, Chair, for allowing me to answer it. I am aware that a number of border councils implemented measures to assist Queensland police in closing the Queensland border, an initiative that has been incredibly important in keeping Queenslanders safe from COVID-19 and again has done since last Friday. That includes erecting temporary accommodation structures for police, bollards, boom gates and that kind of thing. I am aware that different councils put different measures in place and incurred different levels of costs. The fact is throughout this pandemic all levels of government and all agencies have borne costs. Arguably, the state government has borne very significant costs for matters that should have been the responsibility of the federal government. What I have said to local government is we will continue working with them to appreciate and recognise the contribution that they have made to the border closure and to keeping our communities safe but that the greatest way we can support them is by providing funding to them for local initiatives that can create jobs, improve their communities and generally benefit the council.

For the benefit of the committee, I can advise that for all of the border councils the amount of funding provided to them in COVID stimulus far outweighs what they have spent. I understand, for example, Goondiwindi shire council has spent \$57,000 and at the same time the state government has provided it with \$1.35 million of COVID Works for Queensland funding. Paroo, which I think is the example that the member refers to, did incur greater costs, but at the same time the state government has provided to it three or nearly four times that much in COVID Works for Queensland funding. Similarly, Balonne, Bulloo, Scenic Rim, Southern Downs and Gold Coast have all received significantly more funding from the state than they expended in putting those borders closures into place. With this new round of border closures I will again engage with those mayors and those local governments to make sure that what they put in place is necessary and does support the efforts of the Queensland Police Service and that we continue to provide to them significantly more in support of their local communities.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. Member for Bundaberg, you have a question?

**Mr SMITH:** My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, could you please give the committee an update on the proposed Bundaberg flood levee—a project that aims to protect the community from flooding, create jobs and assist Bundaberg in its ongoing economic recovery?

**Dr MILES:** I thank the member for Bundaberg for his question. He knows that the best way we can support his community to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic is to back job-creating local infrastructure, particularly with long-term benefits. As we have shown throughout the pandemic, there is nothing more important than the health and safety of all Queenslanders. The

government is standing with the Bundaberg community every step of the way when it comes to mitigating the risk of another flood. The Bundaberg community has been involved in having their say on flood mitigation since 2016 when we started consulting on the best options available to address the impacts of future flooding events. Our consultation provided the community with a range of opportunities to have their say and keep informed, including community forums, mail-outs to over 600 flood-affected residents, stakeholder meetings and a dedicated website.

The proposed Bundaberg flood levee would vastly mitigate the impacts of floods on the Bundaberg community. It would protect residents and businesses for generations to come. The Palaszczuk government showed our support when we committed up to \$42.5 million towards construction of the levee, but we need the Commonwealth to also show that it supports the safety and wellbeing of the Bundaberg community by matching our commitment. Following the last state election, I lobbied the Deputy Prime Minister for a matched commitment so that we could start work on the levee. I wrote to him in November 2020 and again in March this year seeking a commitment from the Morrison government to support this project. The Palaszczuk government also submitted an application in February 2021 for funding under the Morrison government's National Flood Mitigation Infrastructure Fund, but we were, unfortunately, knocked back. This is especially disappointing when multiple levees were funded in other states.

In June I wrote to the new—or is it the old?—Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce, reiterating the importance of the project and seeking his commitment to its delivery. A co-contribution from the Australian government is simply vital to securing the delivery of this project and without it the project will not be able to commence. There is no question of Bundaberg's vulnerability to flooding—we have all seen that—and this needs to be recognised by all levels of government. Regardless of the Commonwealth's current position, we will not stop advocating for the people of Bundaberg and the importance of the levee. I know the member stands with me on this. I am aware of concerns from some residents of Bundaberg North regarding the potential impacts of the levee. Flood modelling and hydrology analysis undertaken during the design of the levee has identified that the levee will not make the impact of flooding worse in areas that are not protected by it. This includes Bundaberg North.

Of all of the flood mitigation options investigated, the levee will have the largest beneficial flood mitigation impact on the Bundaberg community as a whole. It is expected to reduce the risk and impact of flood events and mitigate flooding for over 600 buildings and increase flood protection, mitigate damage and protect the Bundaberg East area from a one-in-100-year flood event. As I said, we need to secure that support from the Commonwealth.

**Mr HART:** Point of order: I do not see how the Bundaberg flood levee fits into local government, so I assume now we are open slather on any of the minister's portfolio?

**Ms LEAHY:** It is not in the SDS.

**Mr MADDEN:** It is on page 8 of the SDS.

**CHAIR:** It has been pointed out that there is a reference on page 8 of the SDS.

**Mr HART:** So we are open slather, then?

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, you can try if you like, but please ensure that your questions do adhere to standing orders.

**Mr HART:** Just for consistency, Chair.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order: I believe that the destruction that would come about through another flood would directly impact local government as local government own a lot of the roads and properties.

**Dr MILES:** All members of the committee, I am sure, would be aware that the No. 2 supporter of this project after the member for Bundaberg is that great supporter of our government Mayor Jack Dempsey. The council very strongly supports this project. It has the support of local government and state government but unfortunately not the Commonwealth government.

**Mr HART:** This is a protection racket.

**CHAIR:** On your point of order, member for Burleigh, you have no point of order.

**Mr HART:** You have to be consistent, Chair. There is one rule for the Labor Party and one rule for non-government members. It is completely different and inappropriate.

**CHAIR:** The point of order has been dealt with.

**Dr MILES:** I also note that we did take a question from the member for Warrego on the Bundaberg flood levee.

**Mr HART:** In the infrastructure portfolio.

**Mr MADDEN:** Deputy Premier, with reference to the local government service area identified on page 8 of the SDS, can you explain how the recently signed Rural and Remote Councils Compact will create jobs and deliver other benefits for Queenslanders?

**Dr MILES:** Thank you for the question. The partnership between the state and local governments is vital to ensure communities across Queensland continue to flourish and become even more livable places to work and raise families, whether the community is the size of Brisbane or Bedourie. All of our councils face their own unique challenges, be that drought or cyclones, bushfires or floods, limited rate bases or the variety of issues that arise from vast distance and sparse population. An example of our commitment to work together was our promise during the state election to finalise a Rural and Remote Councils Compact. The idea behind this compact is to support better ways of collaborating and addressing the particular challenges facing rural and remote communities.

On 25 June I signed the compact with the LGAQ president, Mayor Mark Jamieson. The establishment of a high-level rural and remote councils policy and legislation committee will see the government working alongside the LGAQ and the nominated mayors from Flinders, Cook, Diamantina, Balonne and Western Downs councils to respond to initial priority issues such as council financial sustainability, roads and housing.

The compact is a genuine partnership between local government and the state and acknowledges the importance of rural and remote communities. The LGAQ identified 45 councils to benefit from the compact, from north-west councils such as Mount Isa, Burke, Carpentaria, Etheridge, Cloncurry, McKinley, Flinders and Croydon to councils in the south-east such as Lockyer Valley, Somerset and Scenic Rim. This is about working together to improve the focus on our rural and remote councils and ensure they have a louder voice for the government to hear. This means that communities like Burketown, Julia Creek, Georgetown, Hughenden, Esk and Lowood will have their unique challenges and difficulties brought to more immediate attention.

We are here to listen to our councils and the entire local government sector, and by collaborating even more efficiently with our rural and remote councils, no matter their size or location, the benefits we can achieve together will be significant and will make a real difference to the lives of people in every Queensland community and we can ensure all of Queensland benefits from the economic recovery underway.

**CHAIR:** I have a question with reference to the local government service area as identified on page 8 of the SDS. Can you outline how the Works for Queensland program and the South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program are allowing local governments to create jobs?

**Dr MILES:** The now \$1 billion Works for Queensland program is helping our regional councils build and maintain community infrastructure, improve livability and create jobs where they are needed most. The program is a vital part of the Queensland government's economic recovery plan. It is so important to the 65 councils outside the south-east corner that we made a commitment during the state election to continue the program with a further \$400 million over six years from 2021. The first \$200 million has been rolled out to councils, who are now employing locals to deliver 333 projects for their communities. The councils estimate that these projects will support or create more than 3,600 local jobs. In fact, by the end of the current funding round, in June 2024, it is expected that Works for Queensland will have supported, sustained or created more than 25,000 jobs in regional communities, with many more to come over the following three years. This is an incredible result for local tradies, local businesses and, most importantly, local families. These jobs will have delivered almost 2,200 projects across our regions, helping these communities to flourish, improve livability and assist councils to meet their bottom line.

This program has proved so successful that, in order to boost Queensland's economic recovery from the pandemic, we have delivered a version of it for the south-east. During the state election the Palaszczuk government committed to assist the 12 councils in our most heavily populated region with a \$200 million program over six years to fast-track investments in new infrastructure and community assets, helping to create and sustain jobs. The South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program has become a vital part of the Queensland government's economic recovery plan. It follows the success of the \$50 million Unite and Recover Community Stimulus Package and the COVID Works for Queensland program which helped these councils negate the effect of the pandemic through infrastructure investment in shovel-ready projects.

Of the \$100 million from the 2021-2024 South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program, \$74 million was allocated to 12 councils, with the remaining \$26 million distributed on a competitive application basis designed to ensure the greatest positive impact for the communities. In total, 113

projects across the south-east have been approved, including 96 projects under the allocation component and a further 17 projects to eight councils under the competitive funding pool. Importantly, the councils estimate that these projects will create or support around 1,455 jobs. There is no doubt Queensland councils enthusiastically support Works for Queensland and the South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program.

**Mr SMITH:** Deputy Premier, could you please outline how the Works for Queensland program is creating jobs and benefiting my great region of Bundaberg?

**Dr MILES:** It is a great region. What I have seen on my visits to Bundaberg is that Bundaberg loves the Works for Queensland program. Through the first three rounds of the program more than \$18.75 million has been allocated to projects such as the new adventure playground in Boreham Park, upgrading the skate facility in Central Park—I trust the member has dusted off his skateboard to get on those ramps—refurbishing the Norville Park pool, as well as improving roads, pathways and security throughout the city. In all, 26 community infrastructure projects received funding in the Bundaberg electorate through the first three rounds of Works for Queensland which have created or supported almost 1,800 jobs so far.

There are plenty more to come, with the current round of Works for Queensland funding over \$13 million towards the new Bundaberg aquatic centre. I know that the member for Bundaberg is excited about the Olympic standard, 50-metre competition swimming pool and aquatic centre. The new FINA standard, covered 50-metre pool will not only be a fantastic asset for the health and wellbeing of the people of Bundaberg; it will also provide an important training and competition facility for local children who dream of one day swimming for Australia—a place for our future Olympians to train. Indeed, the new aquatic centre in Bundaberg may well be a potential training venue for several countries in the lead-up to the 2032 Olympic Games. Additionally, the Bundaberg Regional Council estimates that this project will support or create more than 120 jobs, which is a terrific result.

For the benefit of other committee members, I acknowledge the member for Traeger and confirm that his electorate is also seeing great results. In Traeger alone through the first three rounds of Works for Queensland, \$54.89 million was allocated to projects delivering community benefits—projects such as the Flinders River stabilisation, the Moondarra Drive combined cycling and walking track in Mount Isa, the Georgetown multisport centre, infrastructure upgrades at the Barramundi hatchery in Karumba and improving resilience to cyclones in the Mornington shire.

Through the first three rounds in Traeger, 191 projects are being delivered which have created or supported more than 1,700 jobs so far, with more to come. There will certainly be more to come through the current fourth round of Works for Queensland, with a further 60 projects estimated to create or support close to another 400 local jobs. The Works for Queensland program is a true partnership between our regional councils and the state to create jobs. I know factors such as COVID or extreme weather events have had an impact on councils meeting delivery time frames. Where councils have been unable to deliver projects by the due date, the department has been working proactively with them to provide extensions of time. Works for Queensland is a true success story and a key part of our economic plan, making a positive impact on the lives of regional Queenslanders. It is a great example of two levels of government working together to deliver outcomes for local communities and create jobs.

**CHAIR:** We will go to the member for Traeger for a question or two.

**Mr KATTER:** Deputy Premier, could you update us on the position of the government on normalisation for Port Hinchinbrook and what you are doing to ensure that normalisation is achieved?

**Dr MILES:** I will address normalisation particularly through the prism of discussions we have had with regards to the sewage treatment facility there. Earlier this month officials within my department as well as Queensland Treasury reached an in-principle agreement with the Cassowary Coast Regional Council to work together to normalise the Port Hinchinbrook development and to offer certainty for the community. We are working towards a memorandum of understanding that will deliver a long-term solution for the sewage treatment plant. This will be a joint local, state and federal government agreement and a significant win for the people of Port Hinchinbrook who have waited a long time to see this outcome. We are committed to this outcome for the community, which has been caught in the middle of a protracted situation involving private developers and the council.

I acknowledge the member for Hinchinbrook, and I would appreciate it if the member for Traeger could pass that on. I acknowledge his efforts. Without his perseverance and tenacity this outcome would not have been achieved. In response to a question raised in the House by the member for Hinchinbrook in May, I indicated that I would seek some advice on the appointment of an adviser to the council to help resolve these issues at Port Hinchinbrook. I can advise that the opportunity for this appointment



and other supportive actions from the state remain on the table if needed. We hope to have this matter finalised in the very near term. I look forward to visiting Port Hinchinbrook with the local member soon to see what progress can be made.

**Mr KATTER:** Thank you, Deputy Premier. I welcome your comments. I refer to the Mornington Shire Council and Mayor Kyle Yanner's call for an independent audit to be held into state government services to the community, which has been supported by a 60-strong leaders' forum. Will the minister advise what efforts have been made to fulfil this request?

**Dr MILES:** I am aware, just from media reporting, of that call. I understand that DATSIP is coordinating the government's response. Obviously anything that my agencies can do to support that consideration and support that council—I know how hard it is to deliver services to communities in those kinds of locations. If there is anything more my agencies can do, we will make sure DATSIP know that they can call upon us and we will support them however we can.

**Mr KATTER:** Will the Deputy Premier support the initiative of western and remote councils that, in the past, have tried to have the floor removed in the FAGs scale so that there is a disbenefit to the larger councils and a benefit to the smaller councils?

**CHAIR:** Once again, member for Traeger, down this end of the table we cannot hear you that well. Could you speak a bit louder? Deputy Premier and Director-General, I think you have understood that question?

**Dr MILES:** I certainly know broadly what the member is referring to. There is a requirement under the relevant Commonwealth legislation that 30 per cent of the general purpose component of the Financial Assistance Grants be distributed across all councils on a per capita basis. Is that the floor that you are talking about?

**Mr KATTER:** No. There has been a longstanding push from western councils to remove the component of the FAGs that ensures there is still some delivered to the larger south-east councils.

**Dr MILES:** Yes.

**Mr KATTER:** There has been a longstanding push to have that repatriated to the benefit of the remote regional councils.

**Dr MILES:** I am aware of those concerns. While it is ultimately a matter for the Commonwealth government to determine the guidelines and legislation for their programs, I understand there is currently a review underway at a state level for how they are distributed here. If we can support that advocacy at a federal level, I am happy to feed it into that review.

**Mr KATTER:** Is that review released publicly?

**Dr MILES:** I believe so, yes.

**CHAIR:** If there is more information, perhaps we can come back to you at the end of this session.

**Dr MILES:** I will write to the member for Traeger with the details of it.

**CHAIR:** Are you happy with that, member for Traeger?

**Mr KATTER:** Yes, thank you.

**Mr McDONALD:** Can it go to the committee as well?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure. The Deputy Premier is to talk to the member for Traeger about it.

**Dr MILES:** I am happy for the member for Traeger to table that later when he gets it.

**CHAIR:** We will go to questions from the crossbenchers. We welcome the member for Mirani, Mr Stephen Andrew, who joins us here today.

**Mr ANDREW:** Deputy Premier, I have a quick question referring to page 25 of the SDS, which states that the Queensland Reconstruction Authority's purpose is to 'coordinate action to improve the resilience of Queensland communities'. Will the Deputy Premier or the director-general advise what initiatives or programs have been approved for the Mirani electorate, their value and the status of those projects from 2016 to 2022?

**Dr MILES:** I will ask the Chief Executive Officer of the Queensland Reconstruction Authority to come forward to address the question in general terms. He may or may not have a full list to answer your question.

**Mr ANDREW:** I am happy for you to take it on notice.

**Dr MILES:** Mr Moon, why don't you address it in general terms and we will take the specifics on notice if necessary.

**Mr Moon:** There have been a number of resilience and risk-reduction programs and betterment programs delivered by the Queensland government through the Queensland Reconstruction Authority. I do not have the exact detail in relation to what has been delivered in the electorate mentioned. We are happy to take it on notice and provide it prior to the end of the session if we may.

**Mr ANDREW:** That would be good, thank you very much. Page 20 of the SDS states that the Building Acceleration Fund is 'providing interest-free loans for projects that generate private sector investment, unlock further development opportunities and create long-term employment.' The loans are available to developers, councils and industry. Exactly how many interest-free loans have been made and what is the combined dollar amount that that fund has loaned out to Queensland in general and to my electorate specifically?

**Dr MILES:** During the earlier session, when the member was not here, I went through all of the BAF grants. That was earlier in the day. Rather than run through them again, I will refer you back to the *Hansard*.

**Mr ANDREW:** I apologise.

**Dr MILES:** That is okay. You were not here; I understand.

**Mr McDONALD:** I thank the Deputy Premier for not wasting time.

**Dr MILES:** If the member for Lockyer would like, I am happy to continue.

**CHAIR:** There will be some correspondence; member for Mirani, is that correct?

**Dr MILES:** I referred him back to the *Hansard*.

**Mr ANDREW:** That is fine, thank you very much. I appreciate that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We will come back to the member for Warrego in a moment. Member for Maiwar?

**Mr BERKMAN:** My question is to the director-general in relation to the \$100 million South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program. I have seen a media release from June 2021 announcing some projects but no list of successful projects yet. Are you able to provide a list of the successful projects under that program?

**Mr Walker:** Member for Maiwar, can you confirm, are we talking about the 2021 program? Can you just help me with the time line, please, again?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I understand it is the \$100 million South-East Queensland Community Stimulus Program. I have seen some reference to this in a media release from June 2021.

**Mr Walker:** Whilst my team assembles a few things, I am aware that of that \$100 million there have been at least 113 projects that have been approved. That information should indeed be available. I do not have that full list in front of me and I suspect you probably do not want me to read through the 113 projects at this particular hearing.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Not necessarily, no, but if a list of those could be published or provided to the committee, even if it is taken on notice, just so I can get that list.

**Mr Walker:** Is there a particular electorate that we are looking at or simply the full list of the 113?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am interested in seeing the list, but I was also keen to confirm, if you could, whether BCC applied for funding for the Indooroopilly bikeway stages 3 and 4 under that program. I understand it was not one of those successful programs, but I am interested in knowing whether they applied.

**Mr Walker:** Deputy Premier, through you, I suspect that might be something that we will need to gather some information on. Notwithstanding how good my team is, I am not confident that in the remaining six minutes we will have that information for you. Member for Maiwar, if you are okay with it, we will get that information regarding BCC's application or otherwise.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I very much appreciate it, thank you.

**Ms LEAHY:** My question is to the director-general. Can you advise the committee how the Auditor-General described the financial status of the Paroo Shire Council?

**CHAIR:** That is a very specific question, member for Warrego. Have you got a copy of that? Can you verify that?

**Ms LEAHY:** It is in the Auditor-General's report, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Which we do not have in front of us. We cannot give an answer to—

**Ms LEAHY:** It is public.

**CHAIR:** It is a public document. Once again, I emphasise here, all of the committee needs to consider these things. It is very useful if you can verify what we are talking about. That particular one is in the auditor's report?

**Ms LEAHY:** It is the Auditor-General's report.

**Mr HART:** Chair, I just remind you that we have had hundreds of questions today without substantiation to those questions.

**CHAIR:** Hundreds of questions?

**Mr HART:** It is only the opposition's questions that are requiring substantiation.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair. The Clerk has made it very clear that the estimates process is about the whole appropriations as outlined in standing order—

**CHAIR:** It is, indeed, but we are examining what is in front of us in terms of the expenditure for this coming year. My request is that if you have a question, help us verify that by providing those documentations. Did the director-general have anything to add?

**Mr Walker:** I am more than happy to speak generally about the Auditor-General's report that was tabled in April, from memory. I am happy to talk generally about that if that is of any interest.

**Ms LEAHY:** No, it is a specific question about the Paroo Shire Council. What is the categorisation under financial sustainability? I think the government would be aware of the councils that are—

**CHAIR:** Is that in the auditor's report you are referring to?

**Ms LEAHY:**—categorised as financially unsustainable. I think that would be of interest to the government and the committee.

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, you should have been prepared when you came here and be prepared to give us a copy of that.

**Mr HART:** It is a public document, chair.

**CHAIR:** This building is filled with public documents.

**Mr HART:** That is the point of estimates.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order. The Clerk has made it very clear that we do not have to specify what SDS.

**CHAIR:** Exactly.

**Mr McDONALD:** It has been practice, but there is no requirement.

**CHAIR:** I know, but you are asking a specific question. To ensure that it meets standing orders we are asking for verification. You have asked for a specific comment about a specific issue in a specific paper. Help us out by providing a copy of that.

**Mr HART:** Is that the new rule now, chair, is it?

**CHAIR:** No. I am just asking—

**Mr HART:** Lots of government members have raised questions—

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, I am talking.

**Mr HART:** A bit of consistency, please.

**CHAIR:** Do not talk over me while I am talking on a point or order. Please take note of standing order 249. I have asked the director-general if he can furnish more information on that. Once again, that might be something that is specifically dealt with in correspondence as we have resolved in the last four questions. Can anyone perhaps help the member for Warrego?

**Mr Walker:** I am happy to talk to that, chair, if the committee is comfortable. In terms of local government sustainability, which I think is broadly what the member for Warrego is drawing out, we know that councils are impacted by a range of factors outside of their control that affect long-term sustainability. These include the size and location, population, the ability to raise or increase own source of revenue, the governance frameworks and an increasing requirement to fill service delivery gaps to meet community expectations. Certainly the department understands that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have only compounded that further.

**Mr HART:** Point of order, chair. This was a specific question about Paroo Shire Council. If the director-general does not have anything to add to that, can we move on, please?

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, the director-general is finishing the answer on that. He has answered broadly.

**Mr HART:** He has not mentioned Paroo once.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, that is for me to determine. Director-general, may you continue.

**Mr Walker:** The sustainability of councils is a particular focus of the department. There are a number of councils that face significant challenges, and Paroo is one of those. In fact, we continue to see that Paroo, in terms of the actual Auditor-General findings in the report—and I think the member for Warrego would have a copy of that report—demonstrates that there are some sustainability challenges that they face. It is unchanged since 2018-19, in fact. We are continuing to work with not only Paroo but also a number of the other councils that face some of those sustainability challenges which I hope to provide some context around to the committee because they are not easy. I know that those councils are working particularly hard to overcome some of those challenges—as are we as a department and the government more broadly—around how we ensure that councils are in a good position to continue to deliver good and appropriate services to their constituents. We look forward to particularly getting things like the Auditor-General's report. It is a good way of harnessing and focusing our attentions. We will continue to do that in the coming financial year.

In terms of what we have done, we have written to all councils to emphasise the importance of implementing the recommendations that were drawn out in that report, member for Warrego, including Paroo, and we have written to councils identified by the Auditor-General as having a high risk of sustainability issues to request additional information to enable the department to provide that appropriate support. We look forward to receiving additional information, and that is certainly a council we will put effort into assisting.

**Ms LEAHY:** I am pleased you talked about additional support. Director-general, are you aware of the percentage of rate income that the Paroo Shire Council has had to expend on the state government border closure support?

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, is that included in the letter that was tabled before? I think there is a specific amount that answers that.

**Ms LEAHY:** I am asking if the director-general is aware of the percentage of rate income that this financially unsustainable council have had to expend on state government border control.

**Mr Walker:** Member for Warrego, I do not have those calculations in front of me, but certainly what I can advise is, in terms of what the data that I have in front of me right now talks to—and I think the Deputy Premier touched on this previously—that as part of the response to COVID-19, some \$1.14 million was provided to Paroo Shire Council in the form of Works for Queensland funding which is significantly more than some of the challenges that they have certainly been facing around border closures, for instance. In terms of that calculation that you were seeking, we would have to look into that.

**Ms LEAHY:** It is around 16 per cent that they have expended of their entire rate income.

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, on that, I know you are referring to a figure which I have seen referenced in that letter which was tabled before. Do you have any final question, member for Warrego?

**Ms LEAHY:** I do have a question to the minister. The financially unsustainable Paroo Shire Council have expended 16 per cent of their ratepayers' income on maintaining border closures for the state government. When will the state government pay their border bills to councils?

**CHAIR:** Member for Warrego, this is repetition of a question that you asked before. Are you seeking clarification of that answer?

**Ms LEAHY:** I am seeking a time frame.

**CHAIR:** You are asking for an opinion on that—

**Ms LEAHY:** I am seeking a time frame, not an opinion.

**CHAIR:** You seeking an opinion on payment under future expenditure. I point out that this is all very tenuously linked to appropriations. Minister, did you want to speak broadly about the same issues we talked about before?

**Dr MILES:** I answered the specific question before. All I would add is that I am surprised that in July 2021 the LNP is still opposing the government's border restrictions that have kept Queenslanders safe throughout COVID-19.

**Ms LEAHY:** It is the bills.

**CHAIR:** I point out that under the standing order 247 there is to be no argument across the chamber, members to my left. Deputy Premier, you were saying?

**Dr MILES:** I was going to draw your attention to the time.

**Mr HART:** Have you had enough, have you? Let us not carry on; he has had enough questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Burleigh.

**Dr MILES:** You have not come up with a good one yet.

**Mr HART:** You have had enough questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Burleigh. Deputy Premier, did you want to make a closing statement?

**Dr MILES:** Yes, I will. We undertook to answer on notice the question from the member for Mirani. We undertook to provide on notice some information on grants from the QRA to his electorate. We undertake to do those within the time frames.

Thank you, Mr Chair, committee members and visiting MPs for the interest you have shown today in my portfolio areas. Preparing for the estimates hearing is an extensive undertaking and there are many people in the Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning who have contributed to today's proceedings. I want to thank Director-General Damien Walker, deputy directors-general Michele Bauer, Jason Camden, Maree Parker and Natalie Wilde, and the State Planner Kerry Doss and their staff. I would also like to thank the Coordinator-General Toni Power, QRA's Brendan Moon, the CEO of South Bank, Bill Delves, and the Independent Assessor, Kathleen Florian. I would also like to thank Jasmina Joldić, Mahala Butler, Feiko Ruedisulj, Donna Tobe, Steve Keating, Rob Hazel, Colleen Butterfield, Harry Krebs and Lachlan Clark.

Finally, I want to thank assistant minister Nikki Boyd for her support, my Chief of Staff, Danielle Cohen, and advisors Katherine Wright, Benton Wecker, Amy Hunter, Peter Spencer, Maddie Cunnington, Riley Lang, Ali France, Virginia Dale, Alyssa Van Butzelaar, Carl Ungerer, Kylie Gates, Larin Bligh, Zoe Bos and Will Akol. They have all worked very hard to ensure that we were able to answer the committee's questions today.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Deputy Premier. Those answers to questions on notice need to be provided by 12.30 pm Friday, 30 July. Deputy Premier, on behalf of committee, I thank you, the director-general and departmental officials.

The committee will break for lunch and resume at 1.30 pm with the examination of estimates for the portfolio area of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.33 pm to 1.30 pm.**

**ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES  
COMMITTEE—AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND FISHERIES;  
RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**In Attendance**

Hon. ML Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities

Mr D McIntyre, Chief of Staff


**Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

Mr R Gee, Director-General

Ms B Ditchfield, Deputy Director-General, Agriculture

Mr G Bolton, Deputy Director-General, Fisheries and Forestry

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 **CHAIR:** Good afternoon. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities.

My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, the member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The visiting members who have indicated they will be present are: Mr David Crisafulli, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater; Mr David Janetzki MP, the member for Toowoomba South; Mr Jarrod Bleijie MP, the member for Kawana; Ms Fiona Simpson MP, the member for Maroochydore; Ms Ann Leahy MP, the member for Warrego; Mr Tony Perrett MP, the member for Gympie; Mrs Deb Frecklington MP, the member for Nanango; Mr Brent Mickelberg MP, the member for Buderim; Mr Steve Minnikin, the member for Chatsworth; Mr Jon Krause MP, the member for Scenic Rim; Mr Stephen Andrew MP, the member for Mirani; Mr Michael Berkman MP, the member for Maiwar; and Dr Amy MacMahon MP, the member for South Brisbane.

The committee will examine the minister's portfolio areas of agricultural industry development and rural communities until 3 pm and the estimates for the fisheries and forestry portfolio areas from 3.15 pm until 4.45 pm.

I remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply to 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 this afternoon's proceedings so that relevant issues can be explored fully and to ensure there is adequate opportunity to address questions from government and non-government members. I ask that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode to avoid any interruptions to the proceedings. Also, I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

In line with COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline issued by the Chief Health Officer, I remind everyone to maintain social distancing while in this chamber. Face masks are to be worn at all times and removed only to speak during the proceedings. The COVID-Safe Estimates Hearings guideline is available from the secretariat.

On behalf of the committee, I welcome the minister, the director-general, departmental officers and members of the public. For the benefit of Hansard, I ask officials and advisers 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 areas of agricultural industry development, rural communities, fisheries and forestry 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 three minutes.

**Mr FURNER:** Thank you, Chair. I thank the committee for the opportunity to once again appear before it and update it on the work that has been undertaken in my portfolio. This remains an important process and I welcome the chance to answer your questions today. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet and their elders past, present and emerging. I am joined by Director-General Bob Gee, Chief of Staff Dan McIntyre and senior officers of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, my ministerial office and the respective statutory bodies. I thank the staff from the department who have worked tirelessly once again to ensure the estimates preparation is thorough.

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast a long shadow over the workings of this government. It is a tribute to everyone in my department that they have maintained an excellent focus on both the current and future needs of the agriculture and fisheries industries. The Palaszczuk government remains heavily focused on the Queensland economic recovery plan, and our commitment to create jobs and drive down unemployment has seen Queensland lead the way in the nation's recovery. Our important step early in this pandemic to have agriculture declared an essential industry has proven important in maintaining the momentum of success and problem solving for an industry facing unprecedented challenges. We have seen some of our drought-declared regions recently receive some needed rain and improved conditions; however, 65 per cent of the state is still drought-declared.

The global pandemic has perhaps heightened most people's awareness of just how important biosecurity can be. We have continued to ensure that producers are prepared against the prospect of invasive pests and diseases such as African swine fever while working cooperatively with the federal government to support its efforts. We have remained strong in defending Queensland from invasive pest threats that we face more than any other state in Australia. We have delivered on our promise to hold a comprehensive review of the Animal Care and Protection Act, and we continue to work with stakeholders on that review process.

The budget delivered by the Treasurer last month put agriculture at the forefront of our economic recovery. That is exact where it should be. As a minister in the Palaszczuk Labor government, I am proud to have delivered the third consecutive agriculture and fisheries portfolio budget above half a billion dollars.

With your indulgence, I would also like to acknowledge the passing of the former member for Stretton, Duncan Pegg, who was a former chair of this committee. I acknowledge James Martin, who was successful in being elected the member for Stretton at the by-election on Saturday.

**CHAIR:** We will now commence questions. I call the member for Lockyer.

**Mr McDONALD:** I will hand to the member for Gympie, the shadow minister.

**Mr PERRETT:** Before I proceed with my questions, in accordance with my register of interests, I advise the committee that I own rural land which received a state drought declaration in 2019. My first question is to the minister. I refer to page 9 of the SDS where it shows that the 2021-22 total departmental budget for DAF is \$522.6 million—\$64.1 million less than the 2020-21 actual income. Minister, where will the cut of more than 10 per cent in operating income come from and what services will be downgraded or removed?

**CHAIR:** Minister, obviously there are questionable parts to that question, but feel free to answer it as you so desire.

**Mr FURNER:** Once again, it is like groundhog day when it comes to dealing with questions from the LNP in respect of budgets. It must escape the understanding of LNP members that budgets are budgets—they are estimates. For the 2021-22 year there have been variances as things change. To put it in language that I am sure most of us here understand, I will use the example I cited today from the MLA website dealing with cattle prices.

If a person decided to attend a cattle sale with a budget based on 21 July 2020 prices, they would have purchased a 300-kilogram steer at \$7.45 per kilo carcass weight—that is \$2,235. If they bought that steer this year on 20 July, it would have cost them around \$10.34 per kilo carcass weight—that is \$3,102. Like farming, things can change and farmers, like this government, are good at adapting. Our 2019-20 budget did not take into account the impacts of COVID because we did not know, so the budget changed dramatically and COVID may mean ongoing changes.

I do not mind having a beef about policy. When it comes to a budget, it is a budget. It is an estimate. We delivered an appropriate budget last year in terms of the dealing with this pandemic. Like every other government around this nation and across the world, we delivered appropriate outcomes for our farmers and other businesses across this state. We will continue doing that to make sure we support them. I do not know whether the DG wishes to add to that response.

**Mr Gee:** I can, if the committee wishes, explain the variance between the 2020-21 estimated actual and the 2021-22 budget. As I understand your question, the decrease in total revenue of approximately \$64.1 million between the 2020-21 estimated actual and the 2021-22 budget includes \$25.1 million planned reduction in the 10-year National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. That is a national program. It is associated with state and Commonwealth funding which was previously brought forward from the financial years 2021-22 to 2026-27 to accelerate treatments in the financial years 2018-19 to 2020-21. This has resulted in eradication treatment being completed for 30 per cent of the total area of the incursion. The operational plan is currently under review and subject to direction by the national steering committee and final endorsement through the national biosecurity arrangements.

Further, there was \$17.5 million of centrally held funding released in 2020-21 for the continuation of the drought assistance package including temporary in-drought assistance measures. Funding for 2021-22, as I think most members are aware, again is held centrally by Queensland Treasury and will be released to the department as required. We are hoping it will not be required, but it is there of course if it is.

A further \$9.2 million represents the one-off 2020-21 sale of the former QATC property Berrigurra station. I note there is a question on notice, from memory, that deals with that.

There is a \$7 million expected reduction in revenue from information, communication and technology projects through our business and corporate partnership arrangements. There is a \$6.7 million decrease from national cost-sharing arrangements for biosecurity pests and emergency disease responses other than the National Red Imported Fire Ant Eradication Program. National cost-sharing arrangements for four tropical weeds and the exotic fruit fly strategy responses ceased on 30 June 2021. If the committee will bear with me, I just want to get the details out, if that is helpful. The 2020-21 estimated actual included in that space additional expenditure for the avian influenza response.

There is a further \$6.5 million in funding realigned for various departmental programs to match funding with anticipated expenditure cash flows. That largely relates to research carried over to the forwards.

Then there is \$4.8 million for the Commonwealth funded On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. At the time of preparing the state budget papers, this project was due for completion in 2020-21. The Commonwealth government has recently agreed with the state government to provide additional funding which will allow the program to continue in 2021-22.

A further \$3.2 million is expected to be reduced from revenue from research and development projects, but we will pick them up over this year and the next year. That is our expectation. Those figures of course are partially offset by an increase of \$4.9 million to the fisheries reform process in the fifth year of our 10-year program.

There is additional funding of \$4.8 million to deliver specific initiatives, as announced in the Queensland government's COVID economic recovery package. There is \$3 million in increased supplementation for enterprise bargaining agreement increments.

**Mr McDONALD:** I raise a point of order.

**Mr Gee:** I only have three more points, Chair, if that is okay.

**CHAIR:** Yes. We are opening it up now.

**Mr Gee:** There is \$3 million for the Farm Business Resilience Program, a further \$2.6 million for the very important program around the Pacific labour scheme and a further additional \$2.2 million for increased funding to swimmer safety and the Shark Control Program. Finally, there is \$2 million in additional funding for rural agricultural development grants.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, given that the agriculture sector is suffering from the effects of drought, as you mentioned, labour shortages and the high cost of electricity and water, why was the operating budget cut when every other department has increased their operating budget?

**CHAIR:** Minister, I would question the argument in there, but I will let you deal with that.

**Mr FURNER:** Despite the fact that we have dealt with this question in detail, I am sure that the member would be able to reflect on the short time when the LNP was in government when there was less than half a billion dollars each year. In fact, in the first year it was \$442 million; the second year, \$403 million; and the third year, \$409 million.

**Mr HART:** I raise a point of order. It was a very straightforward question. I ask the minister to answer it. We do not need a history lesson from a decade ago.



**CHAIR:** The minister has only started his reply. In terms of referring to previous budgets, often there is comparison of what is being spent today to budgets previously. There is precedent on that.

**Mr HART:** It is out of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I have just explained the reason why that is an accepted practice at estimates hearings. Minister, could you continue please?

**Mr FURNER:** Thank you, Chair. Once again, the question was based on a previous budget to this budget, so there is a direct correlation in terms of what we study and what we do as a government and what we do in this portfolio. There have not been any cuts. We will deliver on what is expected in terms of this portfolio. Particularly on drought, there is a reform process we are working through, and we are delivering for farmers in times of need. Once again, this is a \$523 million budget—the third consecutive budget for our primary producers that is greater than half a billion dollars. Conversely, if you shine the light on the LNP's time, that is well in advance of what they provided. I am not going to entertain any suggestion that we have cut any budget.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, I refer to page 9 of the SDS which shows the grants and subsidies in the 2021-22 budget to be less than half those in 2020-21. What grants and subsidies are being cut?

**CHAIR:** Minister, obviously we are getting the information for that. I point out, member for Gympie, that I know you are dealing with different aspects of what you see as the budget, but the central point is being repeated.

**Mr PERRETT:** Chair, this is specific within page 9 of the SDS.

**CHAIR:** I know, absolutely—

**Mr PERRETT:** If you read it yourself, you will see a cut. I ask: what programs have been cut?

**CHAIR:**—which I recognise. This is why it is being answered at the moment.

**Mr FURNER:** Once again, in terms of budgets, they are estimates. In terms of this particular reference on page 9 of the SDS, I will go through that in detail.

**Opposition members** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Members on my left, the minister has just started to answer the question.

**Mr FURNER:** The 2020-21 budget controlled grants and subsidies expenses was \$22.6 million. The 2020-21 estimated actual controlled grants and subsidies expense was \$31.7 million. The 2021-22 budget for controlled grants and subsidies expense is \$15.9 million. The variance between 2020-21 and the 2020-21 estimated actual—the increase in grants and subsidies expense of \$9.1 million between the 2020-21 budget and the 2020-21 estimated actual—is mainly due to a \$10 million increase in expenses for the continuation of the drought assistance package. Funds for 2020-21 were held centrally by the Queensland government, as they always been under this government and previous governments, and released to DAF following actual expenses during the financial year.

You cannot predict how drought is going to pan out. I recall when the previous minister was in this portfolio and drought affected communities in Queensland were around 87 per cent. They are currently at 65 per cent. You cannot predict drought in terms of the needs and requirements of farmers.

This is offset by a decrease of \$775,000 primarily due to the realignment of support provided under the Queensland economic recovery plan for 2020-21 to 2021-22 to match anticipated cash flows. The decrease in grants and subsidies expense of \$6.7 million between the 2020-21 budget and the 2021-22 budget is mainly due to \$4.8 million for the Commonwealth funded on-farm emergency water infrastructure rebates, which we have funded as a government historically time after time when the federal government has jumped in and out historically over that period of time. We have been consistent in provided that funding all along. This project was due for completion in 2020-21. I am pleased to announce that on this occasion the Commonwealth government has agreed to provide additional funding which will allow the program to continue into 2021-22.

There is also a \$4.5 million reduction in the drought assistance package. Once again, funds are held centrally by the government to continue freight subsidies and emergency water infrastructure rebates, helping communities that are affected by drought across the state. That funding will be released to the department based on demand, as you do for a drought. In terms of expenditure, you cannot prepare for a drought. This reform is all about making sure that our farmers and primary producers are prepared for drought. That is also the direction of the National Drought Agreement. All states and the Commonwealth are heading down the path of drought preparedness. I can go on, but, once again, it is an argument in terms of what you budget for, what you estimate and what you actually deliver.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, I refer to the decision to close our agricultural colleges—and as we learned from the minister's answer to pre-hearing question on notice No. 3 in relation to graduate numbers, the DAF graduate program is virtually non-existent. Why is the government removing opportunities for young Queenslanders who are hoping to pursue a career in agriculture?

**CHAIR:** I remember one of those questions on notice mentioned that some of those graduates were in different departments. Minister, can we make sure that your answer addresses graduates in the department and not in the digital economy department as well?

**Mr FURNER:** Yes. I thank the member for the question. There is, no doubt, a lot of history in terms of QATC. I could explain the reasons behind that. I am sure the member is familiar with the outcomes of the Coaldrake review. As part of the graduate program for 2021-2023, the Queensland Government Customer and Digital Group within the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy has a two-year ICT graduate program. That program provides each graduate with support, networking opportunities and professional development to give them the tools and confidence to make the transition from graduate to ICT digital professionals and leaders. The Policy Futures Graduate Program is a two-year whole-of-government initiative aimed at building policy capabilities across the Queensland public sector. The Greater Graduate Program has previously been hosted by the Department of Environment and Science. I am not certain whether the director-general wants to supplement my response. I am happy to defer to him if there is anything he would like to add.

**Mr Gee:** I could go on at length about the amount of funding that is in the budget in terms of DESBT, but I think the minister has appropriately answered a couple of questions on notice. Clearly, we have an emphasis on continuing to support agricultural skills, whether that is through membership based organisations and the support we provide there, particularly the rural jobs network and the work we are doing with the Queensland Farmers' Federation in that regard, but I will leave it at that. We can go on if the member has more questions.

**Mr PERRETT:** I will move on. Minister, I refer to page 2 of the SDS relating to budget highlights. Given that the agricultural industry faces unprecedented worker shortages and expectations about social responsibility for sustainability, why is AgTech not even mentioned or acknowledged?

**CHAIR:** Is that in the SDS?

**Mr PERRETT:** It is page 2 of the SDS.

**CHAIR:** That was AgTech?

**Mr PERRETT:** Yes.

**Mr FURNER:** I thank the member for his question. Despite the fact that it may not be mentioned in the budget highlights, this is an important area we are working on with our primary producers every day. In fact, only about a week ago I was with one of the producers in the member for Lockyer's area, Troy Qualischefski from Qualipac. One thing he identified is that times such as the recent pandemic put into perspective that you need to look outside of tradition in terms of innovation. It is good to hear from our primary producers and get their knowledge in terms of what you need to do through AgTech.

I am happy to provide a response to the member's question. Obviously, access to labour is an important aspect, and no doubt there will be other questions in respect of what we are doing in that regard later on. The day-to-day operations of agribusiness AgTech are providing new ways of getting the job done. They are creating efficiencies and driving economic outcomes as well as attracting new talent into the industry.

The Palaszczuk government has committed to supporting agribusiness to digitally transform, be more agile, be more resilient and be more sustainable in a post-COVID-19 environment. One of those areas is the Internet of Things. We have been releasing this information leading to these estimates in respect of what we are doing with regard to AgTech. Artificial intelligence, augmented reality, blockchain, big data and advanced robotics have the ability to transform the way we do business and how we connect to the global marketplace. There are a whole range of things with respect to this particular subject. Round 1 of the 2020-21 Agribusiness Digital Solutions Grant Program saw \$1.045 million—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: we understand how important AgTech is. That is why we asked why it is not included on page 2 of the budget highlights. We do not need a summary.

**CHAIR:** Certainly we are finding this information quite useful, but I am sure the minister is approaching the end of his answer.

**Mr FURNER:** As I indicated in my response to the question, despite the fact that it is not in the highlights, we are doing this every day. I recently announced that the Emerald Agricultural College will be repurposed into the Central Queensland Smart Cropping Centre. In terms of AgTech, it will put that place on the map. We will be delivering for primary industries. It will be an exciting time for primary producers and it will put Queensland on the map, particularly leading up to the 2032 Olympic Games. There are opportunities for Queensland agriculture to shine. I know that our primary producers like Troy Qualischefski are there. Troy has his fingers on the pulse; he is a smart operator. There are many, many Troy Qualischefskis out there who understand the importance of innovation and delivering on AgTech not only in his part of the sector but in many other parts as well.

**CHAIR:** It is certainly exciting to hear what the impact on the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games will be. We will go to questions from this side of the table. Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you outline how the Palaszczuk government is helping agribusinesses access new technologies and practices—this may relate to what we have talked about previously—to boost the profitability and sustainability of supply chains?

**Mr FURNER:** As I indicated earlier, COVID-19 has had a significant impact on demand from access to overseas markets for our agriculture and fisheries exports, particularly with regard to China. In keeping with our approach, throughout the pandemic the Palaszczuk government listened to industry and designed a support package that will deliver real results for our agricultural industries. That support includes \$5.5 million over three years for digital transformation across the state. Nine organisations have been awarded digital transformation grants, and they are for projects right across the agriculture sector. For example, the member for Bundaberg would be pleased to know that Bundaberg Fruit and Veg Growers is the first recipient of this grant. We are supporting them with \$159,000—excluding GST—towards a \$331,000 innovation project. They will be working with blockchain paddock-to-plate systems trialling on-farm traceability technology and providing extension services to their growers through workshops and online materials.

The Queensland Dairyfarmers' Organisation are using their grant to support a digital herd-monitoring project. Ten producers will be supported to implement digital technology, including smart collars for their herd. This will allow farmers to monitor individual cows, allowing for early detection of anything that may be making their cows uncomfortable.

The Digital Transformation Grants are not restricted to agriculture. The Australian Prawn Farmers Association will use their grant to create a Prawn Skills Digital Training Hub that will encourage more prawn farmers to embrace digital technology so they can be more profitable and more sustainable. The association said that this is critical because Australia's prawn-farming industry is expected to grow substantially in the next five years, with 3,200 direct and indirect jobs in Queensland alone.

These grants are part of Queensland's economic recovery plan. It shows just how serious the Palaszczuk government is when it comes to supporting our regions and our farmers. Of course this is the kind of industry support and investment that draws nothing but silence from the LNP. What did their federal agriculture minister have to say at the Rural Press Club breakfast at Beef 2021 in Rockhampton this year? He said that the most important thing that governments can do is get out of the way of agriculture. They want to abandon agriculture. We will not be, and that is why they are thankful for the support we provide them. We will not be getting in their way; we will be providing assistance for them.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Order!

**Mr FURNER:** The Palaszczuk government is standing shoulder to shoulder with farmers.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Order!

**Mr FURNER:** We do not go missing when things get tough.

**Mr Hart** interjected.

**CHAIR:** Order! That is three times I have called for order.

**Mr FURNER:** I want to highlight to the committee that in this term of the Palaszczuk government we will continue to do what we have done since 2015. We will keep looking after the agriculture and fisheries sector. It is little wonder why I continue to be referred to as 'Furner the farmer's friend'.

**CHAIR:** Members, I have ignored some of the interjections on my left. Can you please keep them to a minimum or I will need to take action.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, my question relates to drought support and reform as dealt with on page 2 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can you outline how the government is helping farmers affected by the ongoing drought and the next steps in drought reform?

**Mr FURNER:** I thank the member for his question. It is a very important question for many producers. In 2021 many producers are in their eighth year of drought, and the Palaszczuk government has been with them every step of the way. The 2021-22 state budget will continue to give our drought affected producers certainty, with an investment of up to \$71.4 million over four years in our Drought Assistance and Reform Package. The package will not only continue existing drought measures but deliver on the Palaszczuk government's commitment to reform the drought assistance program.

It was this government that commissioned an independent, comprehensive review on Queensland's drought assistance program in 2018. The review was led by two pre-eminent agricultural industry voices in Ruth Wade and Charles Burke and included close consultation with industry stakeholders. The review called for a focus on greater preparedness and business resilience of Queensland primary producers.

The new Drought Assistance and Reform Package does just that, but importantly it continues to provide support for even more agricultural industries. The new measures include: a Farm Business Resilience Program with co-funding from the Commonwealth Future Drought Fund giving producers access to information and training for drought and climate preparedness; a reintroduced Farm Management Grants program with a 50 per cent rebate towards the cost of developing a farm business resilience plan for their property; state funded drought preparedness grants of up to \$50,000 for on farm capital improvements; and state funded drought ready and recovery finance loans of up to \$250,000 for measures consistent with a producer's farm business resilience plan. The new preparedness grants and loans will become available through the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority later this year.

Future drought assistance measures for drought declared producers will include state funded interest-free emergency drought assistance loans of up to \$50,000. If that is not sufficient, there are drought carry-on finance loans of up to \$250,000 at concessional interest rates, which are also state funded. Whether land rent rebates, water licence waivers and drought relief from electricity charges schemes will be offered in future droughts will be determined on a needs basis during the next drought, as we have done time after time.

I want to stress that the existing drought support program will continue for as long as farmers remain drought declared. Access to DRAS fodder and water freight subsidies and the Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate will not be replaced by the new grants and loans until a producer's drought status is revoked. We are continuing to work with the industry to implement the reforms, just as we have since the review began three years ago.

Of course this is an area of policy the LNP have constantly criticised, including telling mistruths about non-existent cuts to drought programs because they still cannot read a budget let alone construct one. They are yet to come up with a single positive policy on drought support. Queensland's plan for economic recovery relies on a strong agricultural sector. The Palaszczuk government is supporting the sector to prepare for the good times so that they are ready to survive and thrive in the bad times. This budget and our drought reforms help our producers to do just that.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, could you please outline how the Palaszczuk government is driving the technological revolution for the Queensland farms of the future?

**Mr FURNER:** Queensland farmers are known for producing clean, green produce using cutting-edge technology. For decades they have been ahead of the curve, using new methods and instruments to farm the land. My department has been with them every step of the way, but in order for our farmers to continue to compete on the world stage to find new markets they need to remain ahead of that curve. They need to adapt and adapt new methods of farming.

That is why the Palaszczuk government is converting some of our research facilities into smart farming centres, as I referred to earlier. This budget commits funding to the redevelopment of the Emerald Research Facility to create a Smart Cropping Centre. It will be reborn as an innovation flagship that brings together research, development and extension in areas such as farming systems, agronomy, crop innovation and plant protection, together with the latest innovations in agtech and data sciences to deliver a world-class research hub for Queensland's cropping sector. The Emerald property has both the necessary size and suitable soil types for extension activities that support the significant grain sector in the Central Queensland region.

DAF's reputation for world-class research is so well known that the department was approached by leading company Agerris earlier this year to base their Queensland operations at Gatton. They are there now putting their robots and agtech innovations to the test, working with local growers on the farm for the future. Our investment in RD&E activities is helping the industry transform. There will also be opportunities for industry relevant horticultural research to be explored. Last year we invested more than \$74 million towards RD&E—and that was supplemented by more than \$60 million from industry and other sources—for important work like the government's quick response to fall armyworm, the release of four new strawberry varieties and the identification of five locally developed Panama TR4 resistant goldfinger banana varieties.

Queensland's economic recovery plan was built on a forward-thinking, innovative farming sector. The investment the Palaszczuk government is making in the Smart Cropping Centre in Emerald and in attracting leading agtech companies to the Gatton Research Station will help our growers continue to be the world's best.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, could you please outline what support the Palaszczuk government is providing businesses impacted by seasonal labour shortages caused by the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Mr FURNER:** This is an important question and a question I am very proud and happy to respond to. I make the initial point that this pandemic has affected not only agriculture but every other sector across this state, across this country and across the world. All Queenslanders know just how hard our farmers work to bring the world's best clean, green and delicious produce to our plates around the nation and around the world. It has never been more challenging for our farmers—from the effects of drought and climate change to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

The Palaszczuk government is standing shoulder to shoulder with our farmers because we recognise that what they do is essential to our economy and essential to our way of life. We know it has not been easy for our farmers to negotiate the additional challenges that the pandemic has forced upon them. We hear them and we understand the urgency of getting the workers they need to ensure the world famous Queensland produce makes it to its consumers. We have actually worked to make sure that happens.

Already we have facilitated the arrival of nearly 3,000 workers from the Pacific region who have come to Queensland to work in Queensland agricultural businesses under the federal government's schemes. Queensland has led the country in trialling on-farm quarantining of these workers. For instance, in Emerald workers are able to be accommodated and monitored on farm at 2PH, where they are allowed to work during this quarantine period side by side but separated from local workers, wearing coloured vests so there is no issue in terms of cross-contamination by those workers. That happened all over our state. Another 310 workers have completed quarantine at a regional facility in the Lockyer Valley. We will consider other regional quarantine solutions, but they must be assessed carefully and methodically because, ultimately, we want to continue to keep millions of Queenslanders and visitors safe from COVID-19.

In this budget the Palaszczuk Labor government has invested \$2.6 million to enhance the implementation of these federal schemes over the 2021-22 financial year. That is not a solo operation. It takes collaboration with industry and with federal and local governments to facilitate workers being recruited from Pacific Islands nations as quickly and safely as possible so they can get to work. I continue to urge the Commonwealth to act quickly to build a regional quarantine facility—not just one but many of them, like that proposed at Wellcamp. This was on the lips and the minds of people recently at the Central Highlands Regional Council dinner. Yes, the proposed quarantine facility near Brisbane Airport has merit, but our farmers need access to labour in the regions, and more sites across South-East Queensland would help. It is something that was mentioned, as I indicated, at the Central Highlands Development Corporation Farm to Fine Dining event in Brisbane where John Wagner was present. It is not just in those locations where people are raising this; it is being raised across the state.

We cannot rely on Pacific region workers alone. This government is continuing with efforts to attract more Australians to work in our agricultural industry. Our Pick Queensland bonus offers Queenslanders incentives of up to \$1,500 to help them with travel and accommodation to work on Queensland farms. We have expanded this program to allow more people, more visa holders, to access these incentives. We will continue to help industry to access workers and we will continue to take the next steps necessary to protect Queensland communities from this dangerous illness.

**Mr KATTER:** I will jump to my second question, Minister. The last question is a good segue to this one, so you may not have to spend as much time in response. I understand there is still an extreme shortage of workers in North Queensland. My question is: what steps have you taken to establish any purpose-built quarantine facilities in North Queensland?

**Mr FURNER:** Obviously as a result of this budget, \$2.6 million is a step forward in terms of how we facilitate those sorts of requirements. It is an outcome that we will need to work with all levels of government on to make sure it is appropriate. The example I used earlier in my response about the Wagners, who have a position to build a regional facility, is a step forward. It is an example of how business are looking at working outside the traditional methods of using labour.

**Mr KATTER:** Given the urgency of the problem, have the Emerald Agricultural College or the Longreach agriculture college been looked at as immediate providers, given their recent past use as accommodation?

**Mr FURNER:** Those sorts of things are being considered. There is a whole range of interests from not only primary producers but also other resource providers in terms of the use and the repurposing of the Longreach or the Emerald agricultural training colleges. We will not close the door in terms of their purpose, but we will work with industry. We will work with those communities. It is important to engage with those communities on outcomes in that respect.

I take the member's question on board; it is a very important question. If you are able to facilitate and assist us in getting the federal government to fast-track these regional centres, that would be helpful. We have been trying since February last year. Not only this state but also other states have been calling out for the federal government to make sure we stand up and support our primary producers in these particular times. There is a shortage worldwide in terms of labour, not only in agriculture but also in other industries.

**Mr KATTER:** Rest assured we have been trying, Minister. The other question I have is about multiperil insurance. There was an impetus with the drought package from the previous Labor government, with money put aside for development of multiperil insurance, but nothing seems to have happened with that. Has that gone anywhere? It does not seem to have progressed in the last five or six years. Could you update us on where that is up to and if anything has been allocated in this budget? It seems to be taking an awfully long time to get any legs.

**Mr FURNER:** I am uncertain whether there was any money put aside. Certainly in 2017 there was an election commitment to consider the feasibility of removing stamp duty and insurance duty on agriculture insurance products and reducing the reliance of primary producers on government assistance for climate risks, drought and natural disasters. As you are aware, there was a KPMG report analysing that. That draft report has been delivered to the government and the industry has been briefed on its contents.

Insurance duty is currently set at nine per cent of the cost of the policy, so the current uptake of insurance on agricultural production risk, such as multiperil crop insurance, is very low. That draft report has reached ambiguous conclusions. The report states that the removal is unlikely to make much difference to the uptake of agriculture insurance and the report notes that other factors act as a disincentive for farmers to take up products such as multiperil crop insurance including the high cost of premiums and the high risk of insurers in offering such products. At this particular time we have not considered progressing any further with that commitment, but we will continue working with industry on that subject.

As I have mentioned earlier, another area is the reforms we are making in the area of drought. There is a whole range of reforms and assistance we are providing primary producers. The question you asked is another form of assistance that primary producers have raised with us. Once again, it was a commitment to study and provide feasibility in terms of the removal of that.

**Mr KATTER:** Can I tease that out a little bit more? My understanding is that the challenge was getting productivity records and financials from producers to bring the premiums down. Has that been parked? As I understand it, that is how it was pursued in New South Wales or that was the assistance provided. Is there no assistance or no impetus to address that to promote that?

**Mr FURNER:** I might hand to my director-general to talk about the technicalities of that. I can assure the committee that our 2020 election commitment remains; that is, the Palaszczuk Labor government will continue to work cooperatively with the industry on the best approach to agricultural insurance products.

**Mr Gee:** We will continue to work with industry, particularly the Queensland Farmers' Federation, the cotton industry et cetera. I can inform the committee that we are doing some work with the University of Southern Queensland on drought preparedness, particularly around parametric insurance. We are continuing to work through that.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to page 5 of the SDS, which shows a decrease in the average cost per hour to conduct regulatory policy and reform activities in this financial year, and to footnote No. 1 showing that last financial year's higher amount was to support 'the restart of the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Seasonal Worker Programme'. Why is the increase spend per hour not ongoing in the 2021-22 financial year?

**CHAIR:** It will take a moment to examine the footnote in the particular SDS. Minister, are you able to furnish any details?

**Mr FURNER:** It is probably appropriate in terms of staffing hours—if that is what the question is—to refer to my director-general but, once again, this is an area that we worked ahead of in terms of leading the nation in regards to supplying and assisting those Pacific Islanders through the Pacific Labour Scheme and the Seasonal Worker Programme who come to our shores in being supplied spontaneously on to primary producers' land.

**Mr HART:** Not really across your budget, are you?

**Mr FURNER:** If the question is directed to the cost of labour, I will refer to my director-general to respond to that.

**Mr Gee:** I thank the member for the question. We will allocate and move resources around. That will have an impact on the measures. In this budget, though, the extra \$2.6 million that has been provided for the Pacific Labour Scheme—SWP Scheme—will see those resources that we allocated very quickly to the COVID-19 effort topped up, for want of a better word, and hopefully you will see that figure change next year. I hope that make sense. I am happy to offer a private briefing on all those SDS measures through the minister if that is okay.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, I refer to page 15 of the SDS and to the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority and to the comments made by a former QRIDA staff member who said that vacant QRIDA positions were to be accepted from 'known networks only'. Can the minister explain what the term 'known networks only' means?

**CHAIR:** Obviously you have quoted what someone said. Can you furnish us with some verification of that?

**Mr PERRETT:** I will table that, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have a *Courier-Mail* article written by Jack McKay. If the minister and his staff want to look at that, it might help with answering the question.

**Mr FURNER:** No doubt, without sighting the *Courier-Mail* article, I am aware of the article's claims of nepotism. Notwithstanding this, the QRIDA agency referred itself to the CCC. The matter is ongoing as an investigation. It is inappropriate to respond to questions in regards to this investigation.

**Mr PERRETT:** Director-General, the article states that the Premier asked you to look into it, referring to claims three members of the same immediate family worked at the same time within what is a very small subsection of DAF. What was the finding of this investigation?

**CHAIR:** Is this the CCC one?

**Mr PERRETT:** I am asking the director-general to look into it.

**CHAIR:** We are just clarifying it for our information.

**Mr Gee:** I thank the member for the question. In February, of course, that was self-reported by QRIDA to the CCC. As I understand it very clearly, its board of directors caused an independent investigation to occur after the CCC had said to the board that it thought that was the appropriate course of action. As I understand it, the board has been provided a draft of that report. The board has reported back to the CCC. I probably could not say any more than that given it is still with the CCC.

**Mr PERRETT:** I have a follow-up to the Director-General. Has this investigation uncovered who was responsible for allowing the perceived nepotism to occur? What actions have been taken to ensure that this does not occur again?

**Mr FURNER:** On a point of order, this question has been answered both by me and by the director-general. It is under investigation and it is inappropriate to answer any further questions in respect of this matter.

**Mr HART:** What about the second part?

**Mr PERRETT:** The second part of the question was: what has been done to prevent this from occurring again?

**CHAIR:** Member for Gympie, we understand the question. I believe that the point of order which the minister has answered covers both parts of that question. Does the director-general want to add any more on that?

**Mr HART:** Can he choose his own questions?

**CHAIR:** Do we have a further question? Member for Lockyer?

**Mr McDONALD:** I refer to question 5 in the questions on notice of the 2021 estimates regarding fire ants and to the number of sites that have been identified since 2014. How can the community have confidence in this program, which is set to eradicate fire ants, when since October 17 baiting has been occurring yet there were increased detections—from 5,380 to 8,600 last year, and 6,500 year to date, 16 July?

**CHAIR:** The minister can answer that in the way he sees fit. There is an argument in that, but I believe it can pass and you can handle that one.

**Mr FURNER:** That is fine, Chair. I thank the member for his question and note his interest in this area. Once again, I am more than happy to arrange a briefing for him or any other member. The only member that I have had briefed in respect of the opposition has been the member for Coomera, but obviously I am more than prepared to open that up even further. It is important that people understand how the program operates. I am sure the member would be aware that it is a national, cost funded program by all states, territories and the Commonwealth. It is done by a national steering committee which is overseen by the implementation of an independent chair that represents the cost share partnership. As the member pointed out, its program is to eradicate in terms of suppression activities in accordance with the comprehensive 10-year eradication plan. It aims to find, contain and destroy fire ants in South-East Queensland.

The program has now completed intensive eradication treatment in the first of two planned eradication areas, a significant milestone. Clearance, surveillance and destruction of residual infestation in these areas is now in progress. The clearance phase and broad-scale eradication of treatment is replaced by targeted treatment and intensive surveillance over a minimum of two years. Responsive treatment to address public reports of fire ants outside the eradication area is continuing, with substantial improvements in speed and efficiency. Typical maximum response times now have been reduced to a few business days. This may increase at times of highest demand, no doubt, depending on wet weather of course. From 1 January 2021 to the time of writing, approximately 6,550 fire ants and nests were reported and confirmed. Containment treatment will be undertaken on our southern boundary, including the Scenic Rim and the Gold Coast, and we will continue significant engagement with the Gold Coast community.

We are also looking at self-management practice. That is an initiative of a practical demonstration of shared responsibility, because everyone has a shared responsibility under general biosecurity obligations of addressing major biosecurity issues. This will substantially increase the pressure on fire ants across South-East Queensland and potentially accelerate the eradication. The second generation remote-sensing surveillance has been deployed for the 2021 surveillance season. The remote-sensing surveillance can be undertaken over much larger areas at a faster rate and at a substantially reduced cost than traditional surveillance methods. Research is also showing that we are in the process of developing wetttable fire ant baits to reduce the impact of wet weather on treatment and of possible genetic innovations to reduce the resilience of fire ant populations. Those innovations have the potential to reduce treatment costs and accelerate eradication. I am not certain whether the director-general has anything to add on that, but I will defer to him.

**Mr Gee:** I thank the member for the question. It is an incredibly important program. If this program had not been running, our modelling shows very clearly that the pest would have moved as far north as Mackay, as far west as Longreach and down to Goulburn. Well done to everyone in the program. The program really did not get legs and have significant funding until that 2017-18 year. Community awareness has increased incredibly. We make no apologies for that. We thank every member of parliament for helping us in that respect. It is a much larger program. I see the program and our whole approach through biosecurity as a national program. Clearly this is a nationally shared program, but we are developing national assets. The work we are doing in new technology, in terms of remote sensing and new baits et cetera, sets the community up—not just in Queensland but nationally—with really good system for the pests that keep on coming.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 5 and the service area objective to lift the productivity of Queensland food and fibre businesses. Minister, what was the last action you took to re-energise the kangaroo industry in Queensland?



**CHAIR:** Member—

**Mr FURNER:** It is a good question.

**CHAIR:** Is it?

**Mr PERRETT:** I am pleased you agree, Minister. Obviously, the chair had a different opinion!

**CHAIR:** I just needed more information. It was a very brief one.

**Mr PERRETT:** I know you always need more information, Mr Chair.

**Mr FURNER:** I quite often agree with the member for Gympie—on occasions.

**CHAIR:** We won't tell anyone, Minister!

**Mr FURNER:** No, that is fine. It is a good question, because this is a fine area of what we delivered not only in the previous budget but also in this budget in terms of Rural Economic Development Grants. Western Game Processing out in Longreach is a prime example of how they deal with macropods. There was a support loan through the Rural Economic Development Grants, which is organised and delivered through QRIDA. Rural Economic Development Grants in the last budget totalled \$10 million, which represents more than 1,800 jobs in rural communities. There were many jobs in Longreach as well as a result of this grant. \$250,000 from the state government was reciprocated by the business itself. I had the joy of going back out there when we delivered that grant and having a look through their business.

No doubt there are challenges. I note that kangaroos, macropods, are under the Department of Environment and Science, but it is great to see the use of Rural Economic Development Grants for macropods. No doubt there is a surge of them after the excellent weather we have had in some locations.

The new round of Rural Economic Development Grants is being rolled out. That is \$3.3 million in the first year and a further \$3.3 million in the year following. I look forward to seeing the outcomes in businesses right across our primary production areas, whether it be in macropods, horticulture or cattle. QRIDA does an excellent job in the probity and the delivery of these grants. I am really proud to have this second tranche of Rural Economic Development Grants come through in this budget.

**CHAIR:** By way of explanation, member for Gympie, I was going to ask if that question related to kangaroo skin processing, because I have Packer Leather in my area and that is under manufacturing. That was going to be my question.

**Mr PERRETT:** I am pleased you agree with my line of questioning, Mr Chair. Minister, I refer to SDS page 2 and the funding to finalise long-term decisions on the future of assets formerly held by the Queensland agricultural training colleges. I note that \$10.9 million in funding is essentially a third of the sale price of the government's former asset, the Emerald training college's property Berrigurra. Where is the revenue from the sale of this government asset being directed?

**Mr FURNER:** Firstly, there is no secret in respect of our plans through the Coaldrake review in repurposing these colleges, and that is what we are doing. We are engaging with local communities, in both Longreach and Emerald. There is \$16.74 million over five years to maintain those sites in a safe, fit-for-purpose way. You only need to go to the Longreach—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: the question was very specific about where the money is being spent. We do not need a history lesson in the program.

**CHAIR:** I understand. We have only just started the answer. I know that the minister is bringing that full circle. I will let him continue.

**Mr FURNER:** My response relates to how we manage the \$16.74 million over five years. The remainder will be held centrally through Treasury. It is important that we repurpose and maintain these facilities for the purposes we decide to act upon when we closed them down for the use of training and are now opening them up for opportunities for those communities—for example, Savage butchers in Longreach and their micro abattoir. That is a game changer for that industry. We will not walk away from our rural communities. We will continue supporting them. This is a typical example of what we are doing with respect to processes like the Queensland agricultural training colleges.

**Mr MADDEN:** My question relates to the ever-expanding agricultural export industries. Minister, with reference to page 1 of the Service Delivery Statements with regard to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries supporting innovative and globally competitive agribusinesses, can you outline how the government has been helping farmers export more of their produce to key overseas markets?

**Mr FURNER:** It is a great question. Everyone who knows Queensland primary producers knows that they are world leading in terms of what they provide not only to our domestic market but also to the world. Queensland produces—in my opinion and, I am sure, the opinion of many on the committee—the best food and fibre in Australia. It is much sought after in many parts of Asia in particular and in other parts of the globe. I put on record my appreciation of Trade and Investment Queensland for the work it does, in collaboration with my department, to assist our primary producers to get that produce around the world. The Palaszczuk government wants more countries to experience our wonderful Queensland beef, lamb, seafood, fruit, vegetables and nuts. We are not going to let COVID-19 get in our way.

Last year I had the pleasure of taking the Japanese Consul-General, Tanaka-san, to the Lockyer Valley to witness the first crop of kabocha squash being prepared for export via freight to Japan. Kabocha squash is a Japanese squash grown here, as the member for Lockyer would know, in the Lockyer Valley. Previously it was grown by Troy Qualischefski, freighted to Japan and eaten by the Japanese. It is a great story. It was a pleasure to have Tanaka-san, the consul-general, out there for that opportunity. It is a dietary staple of the Japanese and it is much sought after as a vegetable because it maintains its structure, taste and firmness when cooked. It is a \$108 million market currently dominated by New Zealand and Mexico.

With the help of the Palaszczuk government in growing Queensland's food export program and Trade and Investment Queensland, Queensland farmers have a foot in the door. In the last 12 months, the first exports of Queensland's broccoli to Singapore has taken off from Toowoomba's Wellcamp Airport. The first shipment of 228 eight-kilogram boxes of broccoli was picked on a Wednesday, flown out on a Thursday and on Singapore supermarket shelves in time for the weekend.

Importantly, despite the travel restrictions brought on by the pandemic, the Palaszczuk government continues to work closely to increase exports of key Queensland produce. Through the Growing Queensland's Food Exports initiative, the department and industry have: completed trials of a new preservative-free ginger product targeting Chinese consumers; helped deliver markets in the Philippines for Queensland mandarins; adopted new marketing strategies using social media platforms; commissioned research into sea freight opportunities; conducted post-harvest trials of sweet potatoes to the European Union and the United Arab Emirates; and increased exports of retail-ready macadamia products to China.

The government wants to see more great Queensland produce making it right around the world. In 2019-20 Queensland exported approximately \$9.54 billion worth of agricultural products. I want to see that figure grow, and I am sure that everyone in Queensland wants to see that figure grow. I want to see more Australian produce on supermarket shelves in more countries around the world. The 2032 Olympics and Paralympics will be an unprecedented opportunity to showcase our produce to the world, because when we export more that means more money for our Queensland farmers and ultimately more jobs in regional Queensland, and that will be a key part of Queensland's economic recovery.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, obviously horticulture is a very important industry in my electorate. Could you please outline how the government's investment in research and development is benefiting the horticulture industry as well as the wider community?

**Mr FURNER:** I thank the member for his question. As he quite rightly points out, Queensland is very important in that Queensland is Australia's largest producer of vegetables, with an estimated value of \$1.1 billion, and the second largest producer of fruit and nuts, with an estimated value of \$1.78 billion in 2019-20. It is important that the quality fruit and vegetable crops that our farmers grow are backed by cutting-edge research. My department has a long and proud history in horticultural research, development and extension. DAF scientists have worked closely with industry to develop better-tasting, disease-resistant, higher-yielding crops, and the results speak for themselves.

As of May 2021, DAF has made 27 commercial fruit and nut varieties available to growers in industries worth \$680 million to Queensland. The Calypso and R2E2 mangoes were developed by DAF and accounted for 44 per cent of national mango production in 2020. Eighty per cent of all mango exports were the R2E2 variety, and that is a Queensland bred product on a world stage. Our burgeoning macadamia industry, which the member for Bundaberg would be very aware of, is also benefiting from the leading research by DAF. Four new varieties have been released since 2021. It is expected that 73,000 trees featuring the new varieties will be planted by the end of this year.

Another success story that I want to highlight is DAF's strawberry-breeding program. Some 85 per cent of all strawberries grown commercially in Queensland have come from DAF research. These varieties are bred for their great taste, high yield and disease resistance. Queensland growers

cannot get enough of these DAF varieties. I am happy to announce that the wider general public can now grow their own DAF strawberries at home. For the first time anyone can drop into their local Bunnings store and buy DAF-developed strawberry runners, take them home and grow their own delicious strawberries. There are two varieties on offer. Rubygem—and we have examples here today for the committee and anyone else in the room—produces an attractive, moderately dark, glossy, medium to large sized red fruit boasting a sweet and highly regarded flavour. Sugarbaby is an exceptionally attractive, medium sized glossy bright red fruit that is very sweet and flavoursome.

This really is a sweet deal because not only do Queenslanders get the chance to grow their own Queensland developed strawberries at home but royalties from the sales of these runners will be used by DAF and Hort Innovation to fund further research into horticulture. That important research is continuing, with more recent research efforts producing the Blush variety, which are bred with a wild, naturally white strawberry species mixed with traditional reds. The result is a strawberry that is pure white on the inside and supersweet. You can expect to see these commercialised for the benefit of future research and development. This could only happen because of the Palaszczuk government's strong backing for our horticultural industry. We know the value of leading research gives our growers the tools and the support they need to continue producing top-quality fruits and vegetables. I encourage members and people at home to head to their local store this weekend and grab a sausage sizzle, get their hands on the Rubygem or Sugarbaby strawberry runners and try growing them at home, because you will not only get to taste the fruits of DAF's research but also help fund the next phase of horticultural research in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Minister, I note that you have brought examples of Rubygem, Sugarbaby and Blush strawberries in here. You are not going to try to table those, are you?

**Mr FURNER:** No, Chair, but they are obviously for the benefit of the committee. That is the reason they are here.

**CHAIR:** That is good. We want to thank you for those examples. Given it is food and something that cannot be tabled, the committee is going to have to confiscate those, Minister. Could the attendant put them in the room out the back please? Thank you for that, Minister. I know that you are a passionate supporter of the strawberry industry, which is one of our biggest agricultural sectors in the Moreton Bay area. Well done to DAF as well for that. I think I have bought some of those from Bunnings in recent times. Minister, with reference to the SDS at page 2, can you explain how the #eatqld campaign is helping to support our reputation for clean, green, great-lasting produce, whether it be at home or around the world? What opportunities do we have to make the most of this reputation over the coming years?

**Mr FURNER:** I thank the chair for your question. When Queensland is definitely marketing to the world, the message needs to be clean, concise and, most of all, credible. Queensland produce is known throughout this country and also many parts of the world. In fact, I think it is somewhere around about 69 countries that we export to globally, with many more on their way. The world wants that clean, green and delicious produce, and that kind of reputation can only open a lot of doors in the world in terms of looking for quality as well as volume when it comes to secure food supplies. Across the globe consumers are demanding more from their food suppliers. Increasingly, top quality is not enough to get them over the line. They want to know the backstory of what they are buying, including that traceability of where it comes from. They want to know where it comes from and they want to know the story behind the farmer who produces from the paddock to the plate. That is why our #eatqld champions campaign is so important, both here at home but also globally. The #eatqld campaign reinforces what many of us have already known—our produce matches any in the world for quality, taste and nutrition.

We have enlisted the help of many agribusinesses and food sectors to spread that word. Our partners include the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre, Woolworths, Clubs Queensland, Eat Street Northshore and the RNA. It will be good to see the RNA this year. I am sure many of us here will be going to it to experience some of the culture that sees country folk come to the city, so we can enjoy the opportunities both ways. This is all making sure that the #eatqld message is on everyone's menu. Over the last two years we have named 20 #eatqld champions—Queenslanders who have gone above and beyond to spread the word around Queensland produce through both their words and their deeds. A handful of them include Bryce Camm, Chairman of Beef Australia; Carl Walker, Bowen horticulturalist; Kay Tommerup, the dairy farmer and agritourism advocate; and Will Wilson, AgForce cattle president.

People will always desire a product that they know they can trust and that stands head and shoulder above the competition. That is what we have with Queensland's very own produce. When we support our producers on trade missions, either in person or virtually, we are standing shoulder to

shoulder with those people who have a great product in which the world can believe. We will continue to use the #eatqld campaign to highlight the best Queensland producers, suppliers and foodies who can help us take our amazing produce to the world.

The world is Queensland's oyster when it comes to the appetite of our magnificent produce. With the awarding of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, Queensland will see a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Queensland farmers and primary producers. When people from around the world come to an Olympic host region, they do not just come to experience the sport and they do not just come to experience the culture. They will come to experience everything that Queensland has to offer. Winning the opportunity to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2032 is a genuine one-off opportunity to put Queensland's best produce in front of a world audience that they have likely never seen before.

We are justifiably very proud of our produce and its place in the world. These games and the years leading up to them will be an opportunity that we will certainly help our industry to take. I urge all members of the public to join the Palaszczuk government, in partnership with industry, to encourage them to take up the challenge and grasp the opportunity that the games presents. The games are a critical opportunity to build exports of beef from the gulf country and Rockhampton; fresh salad and vegetables from the Lockyer Valley; macadamias, fruits and sugars from the Wide Bay region; lamb and wool from the Central West; fresh fish from the Cairns region; incredible lobster from Townsville; and fresh mud crabs from Hervey Bay. The Palaszczuk government will stand with our primary producers to grab this Olympic sized opportunity with both hands.

**Mr BERKMAN:** My question is in relation to the proposal to phase out battery cages for laying hens. The minister would be aware of the draft recommendations from the independent panel on poultry welfare which includes a recommendation to phase out battery cages. I understand that those recommendations will be presented to the Agriculture Senior Officials Committee in mid-August. Minister, will the Queensland government support that recommendation to phase out battery cages and will our officials be confirming that position at the meeting in August?

**CHAIR:** Minister, this involves a hypothetical and obviously does not relate directly to the expenditures. Did you want to deal with this issue briefly?

**Mr FURNER:** Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question. I acknowledge his interest in the care of animals. Certainly that is one thing this government is very proud about. This is a matter that is traditionally dealt with through the agriculture ministerial meetings. We have had one this year, a short meeting of one hour, and no doubt that is matter that will be considered hopefully before the next meeting, which is at this stage early next year or later this year depending on this pandemic. I am looking forward to seeing that on the agenda.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Going directly to the point of the question, does the government support a recommendation from that federal panel, as I understand it, to phase out the use of battery cages? With regard to the meeting you have referred to, will we use that opportunity to confirm our support for that position?

**Mr SMITH:** The minister may well wish to answer, but I wonder if this is not a matter that would have to go before cabinet and therefore not be discussed in the committee meeting.

**CHAIR:** There are a number of different aspects to this question to vex us here in estimates. I do not know if the minister has anything to add. I think you have already answered, but feel free to add anything more—or not—if you so desire.

**Mr FURNER:** I am not going to pre-empt any outcome of a national body that deals with a program such as this, because it is not solely up to Queensland in terms of what is delivered on a program of phasing out these particular cages. It is a matter where we will continually involve the industry and consult with them. I am quite prepared to engage with the member at a time when we are in a position to deliver that engagement. I acknowledge your interest in this. I give you an undertaking to engage with you down the track when we are closer to an outcome.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate it. I understand that my colleague from South Brisbane is happy for me to ask her question. I am interested also in the recent review of the Animal Care and Protection Act which explicitly excluded review of the rodeo code of practice. Given the strong public interest in the issue of calf roping, will there be public consultation on this issue or more broadly on the rodeo code of practice?

**Mr FURNER:** It is no secret that we are reviewing the Animal Care and Protection Act. There is currently no code dealing with calf roping or the manner of rodeos. We have engaged with the rodeo association for more than 18 months now. There have been positive engagements with the industry. I

recognise the importance of rodeos. I am sure the member for Traeger would recognise the importance as well. At this time there is no direct engagement in terms of that review. There is always an opportunity with the discussion papers that have come back and the evidence and also interest in the review of the act which will ultimately lead to a position where this committee will review any proposed changes to the legislation down the track and for people to appear as witnesses or provide submissions to the review of the Animal Care and Protection Act, and that is the appropriate avenue and opportunity to take.

**Mr ANDREW:** With reference to page 18 of the SDS, there was \$1 billion in loans made under the COVID-19 Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority loan scheme. Could the minister please advise if any of the loans associated with the scheme have been written off as unrecoverable? If so, how many loans have been written off and what sort of dollar amount would that equate to? I could place that on notice to let someone else have a question.

**CHAIR:** We previously touched briefly on this. It might need to be on notice, but I think we might be able to provide some information for you.

**Mr FURNER:** We will provide something now, if that is okay with the committee. It is a good question and once again a demonstration of the good work QRIDA does in terms of supporting businesses that are in need. Throughout this pandemic there were many businesses that required assistance. In fact, it has been estimated that there were 86,000 jobs that were initially supported by the scheme. The loan portfolio is represented by 6,597 accounts and \$941 million as of 31 May this year, and a total of \$49 million has been fully repaid by 331 businesses. A further 108 borrowers made advance payments—a \$6 million total debt reduction as at 31 May 2021. That is \$53.6 million in terms of recovery. Interest charging is now occurring for the first loans in that area and as of 31 May 2021 a total of 1,526 loans have had payments debited, with only 14 businesses not making payments at this stage.

I refer to question on notice No. 805. More detail is provided in response to that question on notice. Once again, it is an area where the Palaszczuk government acted spontaneously in assisting businesses in their time of need, supporting jobs right throughout the state and supporting those businesses that definitely provide assistance for them. One loan has been written off to date, totalling \$250,000, for an Ipswich based allied health business where the loss of contracts led to insolvency. This was not considered to be related to COVID-19 impacts. I am happy to refer to my director-general if there is any further detail you are seeking in this respect.

**Mr ANDREW:** Thank you, Minister.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 2 and the \$5.3 million in funding. I refer to reports of mice causing significant fodder damage and mice running rampant through parts of Queensland. Minister, what actions have been taken to address the concerns currently being raised about a mice plague in Queensland?


**Mr FURNER:** Very briefly, I would not suggest that mice are running rampant through Queensland although definitely through New South Wales, going by the reports we have received and indicating the lack of response in a number of cases. The responsibility in managing mice outbreaks in grain crops rests with the grain producers. Once again, the overall issue in dealing with this particular matter lies with producer organisations. The Grains Research Development Corporation and its research also provide support with this particular pest. Since the beginning of 2021 industry organisations have obtained emergency permits through APBMA to allow the use of zinc phosphide grain baits to more crops. I think the matter is being dealt with currently. We are always open to engage with industry or primary producers on issues such as this.

**CHAIR:** Clearly this is something that is coming across the border but that we cannot stop at the moment. The time has expired for the portfolio areas of Agricultural Industry Development and Rural Communities. I do not think we have any questions on notice. Member for Mirani, you are happy with your answer?

**Mr ANDREW:** Yes, thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister, officials and departmental officers for your attendance. The committee will adjourn for a short break.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.01 pm to 3.16 pm.**

 **CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the fisheries and forestry portfolio areas until 4.45 pm. Minister, if you wish you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

**Mr FURNER:** Once again I thank the committee for the opportunity to answer questions in regard to the Fisheries and Forestry aspects of my portfolio. Again I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather and their elders past, present and emerging. As in previous hearings, I am joined by my director-general, Bob Gee; my Chief of Staff, Dan McIntyre; and senior department and statutory body officers.

You will recall that last year we moved to ensure assistance for fisheries in the early stages of the pandemic and we have continued to implement the sustainable fisheries reforms that are vital to the survival and future successes of our fishing industry. In respect of the forestry space, the Palaszczuk government has delivered on its commitment to establish the timber advisory panel to identify the necessary resources to maintain a sustainable timber industry into the future. In summary, these are important industries for Queensland that support jobs—jobs for thousands of Queenslanders. That is why they will always have the support of the Palaszczuk government. I welcome questions from the committee.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Minister. We will go to questions. I call the member for Gympie.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, I refer to SDS page 1 and the responsible use and allocation of state owned forests and related resources. The CEO of the Master Builders Association, Denita Wawn, said that timber shortages are the most acute problem affecting the building industry at the moment and that part of the problem is caused by decisions made 10 to 15 years ago to reduce plantation timber. Flow-on effects are significant throughout the supply chain and the current uncertainty is leading to significant cost increases. Minister, given the peak demand and supply issue caused by a lack of planning, what is the government doing to incentivise increased investment in new tree plantations?

**CHAIR:** That is a long preamble and there is some argument regarding the cause. Be that as it may, I imagine the minister is keen to talk about the timber industry.

**Mr FURNER:** I note the member's interest as co-convenor of the Queensland Parliamentary Friends of the Forest and Timber Industry Network and I also appreciate his questioning in respect of timber in Queensland. The most immediate priority in terms of identifying areas of sustainable future timber supply options is in the eastern hardwood supply area. Over time it is intended that similar work will be undertaken in other supply regions outside the South-East Queensland Regional Plan area. In this area a decision has been made to end state owned timber production on 31 December 2024. I am sure the member is aware of that. Assessments for available native timber resources on privately land owned will also be undertaken.

I am looking forward to the good work of the panel and the advisory group that we will be establishing, which will include remote and fuel based data collection and analysis. The outcomes of that work will inform the native timber advisory panel, which will provide advice to government on future options and their implications in terms of moving towards a sustainable future. The resource assessment will ensure future directions for the supply of Queensland's important native timber resources, as underpinned by the comprehensive and robust information. In addition, the native timber action plan will include a commitment to accelerate the transfer of up to 20,000 hectares of state forest land in the South East Queensland Regional Plan area to the conservation estate before 2024, after timber harvesting is completed.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, will the timber shortage cause increased housing and construction costs?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure that the agriculture minister is in a position to answer a request for an opinion on housing costs. Member, you have asked about a timber shortage. Minister, do you want to answer that briefly or broadly?

**Mr FURNER:** I will answer it broadly. Certainly, this is one of the areas that industry thought was going to be affected substantially by the pandemic. Notwithstanding that, we saw a boom in many areas of the portfolio, such as with timber supplies and nurseries, as certain businesses were immune from particular effects of the pandemic and people turned to DIY. They went to Bunnings stores and started doing a bit of work around their homes. When the request came for the government to assist the timber industry, it became quite apparent pretty quickly that it was self-sustainable in terms of people wanting to undertake DIY exercises around their homes. The softwood plantation sector of the industry makes the biggest contribution to the Queensland economy. That section accounts for about 80 per cent of the volume of locally grown timber processed by the industry. It is a great industry. With the help of the Palaszczuk government it will continue being sustainable and grow into the future.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 1, where it refers to the responsible allocation and use of state owned forests and related resources, and page 2, budget highlights. Minister, given that timber and forestry contribute almost \$4 billion to the Queensland economy and support almost 24,000 jobs, with the majority in regional areas, why is it overlooked and why is there no mention of any actions in the budget highlights?

**Mr MADDEN:** Commentary.

**CHAIR:** The member for Ipswich West has pointed out the same issues that I raised in the previous two questions, but I am letting the minister answer this once again in broad terms and ignoring the argument inferred in the question.

**Mr PERRETT:** It is fact about the value.

**Mr HART:** Just ignore our questions and answer your own.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order, Chair.

**Mr HART:** It is a bit of a waste of time being here—

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, you have had a pretty good go today. I have tried to help you out with your questions to make sure they conform to standing orders, but you will not take my advice. There is a point of order from the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** Chair, I think you just addressed it there with the interjections. Maybe the member would like to ask a question instead.

**Mr HART:** Maybe Labor should not have sold the timber industry back when. Maybe that would help.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. There is no point of order.

**Mr MADDEN:** Chair, I think we are drifting into reflections on the chair. You are making decisions, and when you make a decision we get commentary from that side of the table.

**CHAIR:** I understand entirely.

**Mr HART:** We are here to ask questions. This is estimates.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, we are here for estimates. Asking questions about expenditure in the budget is what we are here to do. The minister is about to provide an answer to the member for Gympie.

**Mr HART:** But then the minister can answer the question any way he wants, with the chair's help.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, if you continue down this way, you will be warned under the standing orders.

**Mr HART:** Go right ahead.

**Mr FURNER:** Chair, I will not reflect upon your opportunity when you are speaking. I think there are standing orders that relate to that.

**Mr HART:** You just did. You just reflected on the chair.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, you are warned under the standing orders.

**Mr HART:** Thank you.

**Mr FURNER:** It demonstrates the rudeness of some people in this committee and this parliament.

**Mr HART:** Point of order: I take personal offence and I ask the minister to withdraw.

**Mr FURNER:** On that point of order, Chair, I was speaking and that is an offence under the standing orders and demonstrates once again how rude this member is.

**Mr HART:** Point of order: I take personal offence at the minister's comment. I ask him to withdraw.

**CHAIR:** Did the minister refer to you personally?

**Mr HART:** Yes, he did.

**CHAIR:** Did he say 'member for Burleigh'?

**Mr FURNER:** I withdraw, Chair, if that makes it easier.

**CHAIR:** The minister has withdrawn.

**Mr HART:** Chair, possibly you should be listening to what the minister says.

**CHAIR:** I did not hear what you said there. I invite the minister to continue.

**Mr FURNER:** Timber is an area of importance to the Palaszczuk government. That has always been the case. That is why we established the timber advisory board. That is why we support the industry and we will continue doing that.

**Mr HART:** That is why you sold it.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 7 and question on notice No. 8 that the minister responded to. It is now 21 months since the timber advisory panel was promised by the Premier. No recommendations have been made and no meaningful actions have been taken to date. Why?

**CHAIR:** Member for Gympie, I am not even going to ask how this relates to expenditure, but I am allowing this one through.

**Mr PERRETT:** The minister has already mentioned it, Chair.

**Mr FURNER:** I will respond to that question. I can recall being in Maryborough with the member for Maryborough. I attended the timber board's first meeting. Of course, there are no recommendations out of an inaugural meeting. They will advise the government in terms of the best direction forward in terms of a sustainable industry. I am looking forward to that engagement. It is a great board that is made up of people with experience, people with passion for not only industry but also the environment and the science behind this particular area, and Indigenous representation. They will offer the best advice for us to make informed decisions in progressing forward. As with every panel, there will always be comments over inclusions. I know there has been interest from other parts of the sector wanting to be involved, but no doubt they will have their opportunity of engagement through the government. We are a listening government that delivers on behalf of the industry. This is another example where we will do that. I am not going to pre-empt the outcomes or the advice of that committee. I am looking forward to further engagement with them in the future.

**Mr PERRETT:** Was the only meeting to date a meet-and-greet with coffee and cake?

**CHAIR:** I will rule that one out of order. It is argumentative, there is imputation and it contains personal reflections. It breaches standing orders 112 and 115. Do you have another question, member for Gympie?

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 7 and the use of state owned forests and related resources. North Queensland sawmillers and loggers of native hardwood face potential job losses and business closures because they operate on a year-to-year arrangement without a guarantee of supply. Minister, will you commit to a 10-year agreement to provide certainty for these small, family run businesses?

**CHAIR:** Member, you have asked for an opinion. Can you relate this to expenditure? You have asked for a commitment.

**Mr PERRETT:** I have referred to SDS page 7 and the use of state owned forests and related resources. It relates to the availability of the resource for these family businesses.

**CHAIR:** I think you are struggling to connect that to an examination of expenditure.

**Mr PERRETT:** It is an important part—

**CHAIR:** Doubtless it is important, but you know that you have to connect it.

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair: there would be an extreme additional cost in operating on a year-to-year basis of renewing permits. It is about certainty for the industry.

**CHAIR:** I understand what you are getting at and you are touching on efficiency and effectiveness of operation, but you are still tending towards asking for an opinion. Does the minister want to furnish any information in relation to that?

**Mr FURNER:** I think I answered that in part in my previous answer, but I will defer to my director-general to complement that.

**Mr Gee:** DAF supplies state owned native forests in Central Queensland, North Queensland and the northern Cape York Peninsula using both long-term and short-term sales permits. I have not got the actual data around the length of those long-term sales permits, but hopefully before we finish I will be able to provide further detail on that, if that is okay.

**CHAIR:** Yes, certainly.

**Mr HART:** Minister, given your comments about the support you have for the timber industry, how do you reconcile that with Labor's sale of Forestry Plantations Queensland in 2010?

**CHAIR:** There is a point of order from the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** What is the relevance to the SDS for this budget year?



**Mr HART:** I am responding to the minister's quotes before about supporting the timber industry.

**CHAIR:** I know what you are doing, member for Burleigh. Once again, I think you are really—

**Mr HART:** Chair, you just cannot pick the questions that you like for—

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, I have not finished yet.

**Mr HART:** It is a fair question.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, you are asking for a comparison with what happened in previous budgets, which is legitimate. I am going to allow the minister to answer this one and refer perhaps to previous governments and their records?

**Mr FURNER:** I know he was in parliament during the period 2012 to 2015 when we saw that government cut more than 600 FTEs from this amazing portfolio. Many of those were cut from forestry.

**Mr HART:** Answer the question.

**Mr FURNER:** It is a bit brash of him to come in here expecting me to answer questions about previous governments when shamefully he was in the chamber overseeing the cuts made by the Campbell Newman government. I think he has resigned from the party now. The belief that the LNP still hold in terms of how they manage industries and how they manage budgets—

**Mr HART:** Cannot answer the question.

**Mr FURNER:** That will glow on for many years into the future.

**CHAIR:** One moment. Member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** The member continues to breach standing orders under a warning.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, I point out for the last time that you have been warned under the standing orders because of your interjections—

**Mr HART:** Can I please have a response to my question?

**CHAIR:** Please cease your interjections. Minister, could you finish your answer.

**Mr FURNER:** Once again, I am more than happy to put on the record our delivery of more than a half a billion dollars over three consecutive budgets for not only forestry but also the whole of agriculture compared to their pathetic delivery of budgets—

**Mr HART:** You are hiding from selling it.

**Mr FURNER:** Once again, Chair, I am being interrupted by the member for Burleigh—

**Mr HART:** \$500 million.

**Mr FURNER:**—in breach of the standing orders.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, I have given you numerous warnings. How about you take a break for an hour under standing order 253A.

**Mr HART:** Your call.

*Whereupon the member for Burleigh withdrew from the committee at 3.33 pm.*

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, can I ask for clarification?

**CHAIR:** Sure.

**Mr McDONALD:** Was that a direction or a question?

**CHAIR:** No, it was a direction all right.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, at a Timber Queensland symposium you guaranteed that 'current holders of sales permits for state owned native timber in the western hardwoods region have guaranteed supply until 2034'. Why not provide the same arrangements to those in North Queensland?

**Mr FURNER:** No doubt this is a matter that we will deal with on the advice of the timber advisory panel. As a government we will act upon that advice. As a whole of government we will decide what is appropriate in terms with dealing with this matter that the member has raised. I will hand over to my director-general for further engagement on this particular question.

**Mr Gee:** I think the minister has already covered the role of the timber advisory panel, but if it is okay with the minister, the member and the chair, I might call on Deputy Director-General of Forestry and Fisheries, Graeme Bolton, to add some value.

**Mr Bolton:** I can confirm that we do have a number of long-term permits in North Queensland. We have one permit that is valid out to 2034. We have another permit that is valid out to 2028. We have a number of other permits that are on an annual roll over basis at this point in time. Once the work on the native timber action plan and of the native timber advisory panel has been completed that will inform how we structure permits moving forward.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, the closure of access to South-East Queensland state forests in 2024 and the failure of government to provide replacement stock will result in more than a 40,000 cubic metre log deficit to small country sawmills. Where will the replacement resource come from?

**CHAIR:** Minister—

**Mr SMITH:** It is hypothetical.

**CHAIR:** It is clearly hypothetical and argumentative.

**Mr PERRETT:** That is not hypothetical; that is a fact.

**CHAIR:** You are not verifying it. I am going to allow the minister to answer that as he sees fit.

**Mr FURNER:** It would be important for the member to verify his assumptions based on that proposal. Once again, that is why we established the timber advisory panel to engage with industry. We have some good people on that panel that will deliver outcomes that this government deal with into the future.

**Mr PERRETT:** Was the replacement stock supposed to come from the 5,000 hectares and 10 million trees promised by former premier Peter Beattie and former minister Henry Palaszczuk?

**CHAIR:** Should I rule that out of order?

**Mr PERRETT:** It is a fair question and I have the press releases from the time.

**CHAIR:** If you have something that we can look at that would be good. We are looking at a media release from 1999—last century.

**Mr PERRETT:** I have quoted directly from that as to what response—

**CHAIR:** You probably have.

**Mr PERRETT:** I can verify the fact and the claim.

**CHAIR:** So the question is relating to this?

**Mr PERRETT:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Can we give a copy of this to the minister. Minister, can you answer this in terms of the expenditure for the upcoming year. Obviously, if you want to refer back to previous governments that would be appropriate as well.

**Mr PERRETT:** I look forward to that!

**Mr FURNER:** I am happy to respond. This dates back to 1999. The hardwood plantation program commenced in that year. It was a 5,000-hectare commitment by the Queensland government then as part of the South-East Queensland forest agreement. Later it was expanded to 20,000 hectares. The program was to provide an alternative resource for the hardwood processing sector for the Queensland timber industry. The responsibility for that program was to transfer to HQPlantations in 2010.

As part of the privatisation and sale of the state's former forestry plantation business, following concerns raised by the industry, an independent review undertaken in 2015 to assess the effectiveness of the plantation estate found that plantations were performing well below expectations due to poor site and species selection and the impact of drought, pests and diseases. I am certain that people can accept the fact that climate change and other measures had an impact on that particular industry. No doubt, as we work through the advice of the timber panel, we will look at other measures that will become apparent through that process.

HQPlantations and the minister terminated the deed on 18 February 2019, subject to the conditions to ensure that viable plantations are either retained until final harvest or offered to the market, including the timber industry. HQPlantations was also required to provide a financial contribution to the state for terminating the deed. Reflecting on what happened in 1999, the times are quite different today. If the member wants to be patient, we will wait and see the advice from the panel. I am more than happy to assist the member in terms of any future outcomes arising out of that panel, providing that is in confidence. We will provide the member with assistance into the future.

**CHAIR:** Members, please ask questions that relate to the budget. I have a document that is nearly 22 years old.

**Mr PERRETT:** Trees take a long time to grow, Chair.

**CHAIR:** So do your questions. Can we please relate questions to the budget? A bit of hard work there would be useful.

**Mr PERRETT:** It is relevant.

**CHAIR:** I have a question for you, Minister. This relates to the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. That is talked about in the Service Delivery Statements on page 2. Can you outline progress in implementing the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy?

**Mr FURNER:** The need for fisheries reform has been established over several years now, starting with the review undertaken by the MRAG report in 2014 under the previous government and followed by the green paper in 2016. That reached more than 11,000 submissions. Quite clearly, the overwhelming message then and now was that stakeholder groups want reforms. They want reforms in the way fisheries are managed. The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027, which was released in June 2017, and the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Act, which took effect on 28 May 2019, create a modern, responsive and consultative framework for fisheries management.

Despite the setbacks associated with COVID-19, we remain well placed for the delivery of those 33 actions set out in the strategy by 2027. As part of the strategy, the Palaszczuk government is committed to having no overfished stocks by 2027. Progress reports on the implementation of the strategy are published on the DAF website, together with announcements of recent reforms. It is clear that good progress is continuing in implementing the strategy.

Almost half of all the actions were delivered in the first two years. Many elements of the strategy have commenced or been completed over the last 12 months. Regulations were updated in 2019 and 2020, with the second round of reforms announced on 30 September 2020. The new regulation changes will divide the crab, the trawl and the east coast inshore fisheries into new management regions. That will create new quota units, so the catch of priority species can be controlled directly. Changes necessary to protect and maintain export approvals will commence on 1 September 2021. There are several red-tape-reduction and streamlining measures and minor administrative amendments.

Of course Queensland fisheries will long remember the irresponsible attitude of the LNP in opposing our updated sustainable fisheries regulations in this parliament. They show no care for the fishing industry, no understanding of how these regulations support exporters and a callous disregard for the protection of fish stocks for the future.

To support the continued implementation of the strategy, 10 fishery working groups and the Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel have now been appointed or reappointed for further terms. They will continue to provide both operational and independent technical advice to both Fisheries Queensland and the government.

Public consultation on the 13 draft harvest strategies and the one draft protected species management strategy was conducted between September 2020 and January 2021. They have since been approved, along with a harvest strategy policy, and will form a critical part of the framework to guide the future management of our fisheries, commencing on 1 September 2021.

Five stock assessments are currently considered to have sustainability concerns, based on the national standard of a minimum estimate of 20 per cent biomass of unfished stocks. Of these five, three stocks—namely, snapper, pearl perch and saucer scallops—are considered to be depleted or overfished. The other two stocks—namely, the Gulf of Carpentaria king threadfin and Spanish mackerel—are considered to be depleting and below sustainable limits.

Information describing the status of the Queensland fish stocks is available online via the national Status of Australian Fish Stocks Reports and on the DAF website. DAF also complements that with more detailed quantitative stock assessments on quota managed species and species that have substantial concerns.

Stock assessments are derived from complex mathematical models that are based on accurate catch and effort data and detailed information on the biology of the species such as age, sex and length data. Stock assessments do more than determine the sustainability status of the stock; they are essential for setting sustainable catch and effort quotas and to test the performance of fisheries management and strategies.

A free smartphone app for Queensland's recreational fishers was launched in October 2020. 'Qld Fishing 2.0' aims to assist recreational fishers to better understand and comply with fishing rules and regulations. The commercial fishing app is due for release with the commencement of legislation

changes on 1 September 2021. The government remains committed to working with each of the fishery sectors through fishery working groups and public consultation and to continually improve how we engage stakeholders and manage our fisheries.

A further round of reforms to commence on 1 September 2021 includes allocating individual quotas, setting commercial catch limits, ensuring better management of bycatch and protected species interactions, and implementing harvest strategies for 13 fisheries. Implementing these reforms will allow the removal of investment warnings notified to fisheries when reforms began, while ensuring our fisheries have federal government wildlife trade operation export approvals in place.

Our fisheries must be sustainable so we can protect and sustain the thousands of jobs in both the commercial and the recreational sectors, provide ongoing enjoyment for the thousands of recreational fishers, protect those with traditional fishing rights and continue to provide great Queensland seafood on our tables. That is why the Palaszczuk government is fully committed to delivering on our Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, which will deliver a world-class fisheries management system for Queensland and ensure we have fish for the future.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, could you please outline how development of Queensland's aquaculture industry will contribute to jobs and economic development in our regions?

**Mr FURNER:** My vision is no secret. I have been up-front right from the beginning in terms of aquaculture. I want to see Queensland being the aquaculture capital of the world. I do hope the committee members appreciate the Palaszczuk government achieving this. In 2019-20 the total production of Queensland's aquaculture industry was 9,536 tonnes, representing a total of \$164.9 million. That is a new record of aquaculture production in Queensland. It represents a 39 per cent increase from \$118.4 million in 2018-19. The outstanding growth is evidence that the Palaszczuk government's focus is on growing aquaculture and creating jobs in the regions.

Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and the Gold Coast stand out as the powerhouse regions for driving aquaculture production. We know that when we support the aquaculture industry in Queensland we support local jobs and the opportunity for Queenslanders to enjoy more quality Queensland seafood. With an increase in production comes a 15.2 per cent rise in the number of people employed in our aquaculture industry—now 718 full-time-equivalent jobs. It should be noted that the industry is supported by a substantial number of on-farm services which have flow-on benefits for employment and regional development.

The two main species produced in Queensland are prawns and barramundi. Prawns are the real stars in the increase of the total value of aquaculture, jumping by 34.9 per cent from 4,630 tonnes in 2018-19 to 6,245.2 tonnes in 2019-20. It remains the largest aquaculture employer with 66 per cent of the industry's total labour force. Red claw and freshwater fish species have also recorded significant increases in value and production.

The future of aquaculture in Queensland includes prawn production and is looking very bright indeed. The total value of our aquaculture industry is expected to continue to increase in coming years, with continued investment in several sectors and future development in aquaculture development areas. Since 1999-2000, the overall industry value increased on average at a rate of 6.4 per cent per annum. The long-term 20-year average has the industry increasing at a rate of 6.1 per cent per annum. Over the last 12 months there has been significant development in Queensland's aquaculture industry, with interstate companies including Tassal, Ornatas and MainStream all investing in Queensland. Both Tassal and Ornatas are Tasmanian companies, so they have come to Queensland investing in our industry and investing in jobs in Queensland.

Underpinning these very positive developments in 2019 are six land based marine aquaculture development areas totalling 7,048 hectares that were identified to promote and grow a sustainable aquaculture industry in Queensland. ADA's are located in coastal areas suitable for farming in ponds. ADAs were identified in consultation with the aquaculture industry, government agencies and land owners using planning methodology and applying physical, environmental and planning selection criteria. The six ADAs identified are in Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Whitsundays and Townsville council areas. Other councils have expressed interest. Chair, today I am pleased to announce that another two ADAs have been identified. The new sites are in the Hinchinbrook shire region, with a combined area of around 2,000 hectares. I want to thank the local council for being pro-active in working with the Palaszczuk government to identify areas to grow the aquaculture industry in their regions. Having ADAs recognised under the state planning policy supports local councils to consider aquaculture developments in their own planning schemes.

ADAs help identify areas with the potential for land based marine aquaculture development, and DAF will work with investors interested in development with an ADA. Formal approvals will be required for an aquaculture development; however, the ADAs are considered the most suitable for development and are likely to represent an approvals path with the least amount of triggers. DAF has established an Aquaculture Industry Development Network that brings together all aquaculture activities across DAF to more effectively case manage and support proponents through the approval process through practical support for investors. By proactive planning and exploring initiatives, technologies and approaches, environmental impacts can be minimised while growing this important industry.

Of course aquaculture development is not restricted to ADAs, and we welcome well-founded aquaculture proposals in other suitable locations. While those opposite have never been vocal supporters of aquaculture and have opposed improving any aspects of Queensland's fisheries industry, the Palaszczuk government has worked hard with the private sector to position Queensland as—

**Mr McDONALD:** I have a point of order on relevance, Chair.

**CHAIR:** I understand. I find that the minister's answer meets what the member asked, but I do trust the minister is coming full circle around to finish that answer.

**Mr FURNER:** The Palaszczuk government has worked hand in hand with the private sector to position Queensland as the leader in aquaculture to grow industries and create jobs in Queensland. This will continue to make a rapidly growing contribution to Queensland's economic recovery plan.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, I refer to pages 2 to 7 of the Service Delivery Statements. Can you outline the status of the native timber sustainable resource assessment and how this will contribute to Queensland's economy and employment?

**Mr FURNER:** In 2019 the Premier and I launched the native timber action plan to ensure a sustainable future for the native timber industry. The native timber industry supports employment and investment throughout regional and rural Queensland. The Palaszczuk government's native timber action plan has been developed to support those industry jobs. The native timber action plan committed to: continuing the supply of state owned native timber in the eastern hardwoods region—which includes the Wide Bay-Burnett region—through to 31 December 2026; establishing a native timber advisory panel, bringing the unsuccessful hardwood plantation program—a partnership between HQPlantations and the Queensland government—to a close; ending the annual extension of rolling-term permits in the western hardwoods region, with sale permits to end in 2034; and conducting a comprehensive study to identify sustainable future options for native hardwood timber supply with the initial focus on the eastern hardwood region.

Of those commitments, we have continued to supply state owned native timber in the eastern hardwoods region for an additional two years, guaranteeing access up to 2026. We have brought the unsuccessful hardwood plantation program, a partnership between HQPlantations and the Queensland government, to a close. The rolling-term permits in the western hardwoods region have ended and will cease from 2034. The native timber advisory panel had its first meeting in June of this year. The resource assessment was delayed due to prioritising our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study will be informed by detailed native forest resource assessments that consider forest growth rates and the level of harvesting or yield that is sustainable over time.

This specialist technical work is being overseen by DAF with tasks that involve spatial data collation, onsite inventory work and ground truthing as well as data analysis and modelling. The most immediate priority will be to identify sustainable future timber supply options in the eastern hardwoods supply area. Over time, similar work will be undertaken in all other supply regions outside of the South East Queensland Regional Plan area. In this area a decision has been made to end state owned native timber production on 31 December 2024. Assessments of available native timber resources on privately owned land will also be undertaken, including remote and field based data collection and analysis. Outcomes of this work will inform the native timber advisory panel and ensure that future decisions about the supply of Queensland's important native timber resources are underpinned by comprehensive and robust information.

The timber industry is a very important part of Queensland's plan for economic recovery, employing 8,800 people and injecting \$3.8 billion into the economy every year. We have delivered a strong election commitment that ensures job sustainability and a bright future for Queensland.

**CHAIR:** We might go to the member for Traeger for a question.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, I understand that new methodology has been applied to the mackerel industry which says it is not threatened. I understand that you referred to it earlier. Given that, leading up to that, at times harvests have been only 50 per cent of the quota, as reported to me, and now it is under stress, does the minister see that as a fault in the previous methodology, as a result of the change in methodology or perhaps, thirdly, as a result of inaccurate data capture?

**Mr FURNER:** No doubt over time it has been the case that, as science and other important measures of gauging whether it be fisheries or other areas become evident, it is important that it is recognised for the identification of a mass such as Spanish mackerel to identify the biomass. It is an important question that I will refer to my director-general to expand on what that means in terms of one measure some years ago and the current measure in terms of how you determine the stock assessment on a species such as Spanish mackerel.

**Mr Gee:** I might refer the question, if it is okay with the member and the chair, to my deputy director-general.

**Mr Bolton:** As the member may be aware, the preliminary results from a recent draft stock assessment indicate that the east coast Spanish mackerel estimate biomass is somewhere between 14 per cent and 27 per cent—most likely around 17 per cent. That means we need to look at taking some strong management action. These results are unlikely to be surprising to many stakeholders. There have been a number of surveys and other assessments over the last two decades that have suggested that the Spanish mackerel stock may not be as healthy as it would appear.

You are quite correct that we did change the stock assessment model recently. The 2021 stock assessment is an update of the 2018 stock assessment. We are using a new model called the stock synthesis model, which was a recommendation of the Sustainable Fisheries Expert Panel. This particular model is the current best practice model. It is used internationally and it is also used by organisations such as CSIRO as the model of choice. It is the best model out there.

In addition to that, we have much better data now than we did three or four years ago. To give you a bit of a snapshot from that data, the Spanish mackerel stock assessment data comes from sources from the top of Cape York in North Queensland all the way down to the southern parts of New South Wales—so it is one big biomass that we manage together. The commercial harvest information was collated from 238,557 Queensland and New South Wales logbook records. The annual Spanish mackerel catch rate was calculated from 192,348 Queensland east coast Spanish mackerel logbook records. We also incorporate charter harvest data collated from 37,698 logbook records. The recreational catch data was based on statewide recreational fishing surveys from Queensland and New South Wales. It is based on random telephone surveys which look at weight information on the recreational Spanish mackerel catch. We also incorporate boat ramp data surveys from 1,488 individual surveys across 18 regions from Cooktown to the Gold Coast. We also incorporate length and age data—length data from 70,141 fish and age data from 18,193 fish. We have quite a substantial amount of data that is now informing these stock assessments.

**Mr FURNER:** Could I just add to that—

**CHAIR:** Member for Traeger, before we come back to you, do you want the minister to add to that?

**Mr KATTER:** The minister may want to respond to this, because I still am a bit unclear. It was a really good explanation, but I am still a little unclear. Given that there was below-quota catch—withstanding those comments that there was an observation made by fishermen out there that there was a reduction in stock; there was still under-quota harvest in that category—can we draw the conclusion that the previous methodology was inadequate?

**CHAIR:** We might go to the minister first and see if he can add some more to that.

**Mr FURNER:** Most of us have an interest in fisheries. I do not get the opportunity to get out on the water as much as I used to, but it is a very important industry. Just the other day we were receiving a briefing from the fisheries department in terms of data collection and how that is done. The deputy director-general went through some detail on that and there is a response to question on notice No. 20.

When we get to that stage where that data is analysed to the degree we are able to release that, I am more than happy to invite you along to be briefed on that. It is an excellent program. I think it is pretty well bulletproof. I have been out on the beaches of Fraser Island once before with the fish monitoring group to see how they deal with determining the stock assessment on tailor—cutting the head off a frame to determine the age of that particular fish and how you determine how you deal with that stock. There is a whole range of data that is collected by Fisheries. This new step is a

state-of-the-art stage of how you deliver that data. When we are at a point of delivery, it would be a good opportunity for you and any members of the committee to have that oversight in terms of how we explain the data and how these decisions are made.

Once again, when it comes to Spanish mackerel, we are not at a point of making a decision on what we will do with this particular species. We will do that through consultation through the working group and through consultation with people like you and other parts of the community.

**Mr KATTER:** Chair, can I follow up on that? Minister, you mentioned swimmer safety and the drum lines. Can you advise what numbers are being caught in the drum lines? Has there been an increase represented? I could shortcut to the next question—that is, is there any link with that and the reduced fishery in, say, mackerel?

**CHAIR:** I thought there was a follow-up Spanish mackerel question but that is not.

**Mr FURNER:** I think there is some correlation there with Spanish mackerel. I know exactly where the member is coming from. That is one of the areas where we want to capture that data as well in terms of shark engagement, with bringing up a Spanish mackerel or other species when fishers are out on the water. If the question is related to the number of sharks caught on the drum line, I am more than happy to cover that off if that is what the member is after.

The Shark Control Program operates in those 86 popular beaches. In some areas it is a combination of nets and drum lines; some beaches are pure drum lines. During the 2021 period, outside of the marine park there was a total of 665 sharks caught in the program apparatus. That included 234 tiger sharks, 102 bull sharks and eight white sharks. Within the marine park there were 221 sharks caught in the program apparatus, including 62 tiger sharks and 45 bull sharks. Of those, 37 tiger sharks and three bull sharks were tagged as part of the requirement that has been put on us and they were released live in the marine park. Outside of the marine park, 444 sharks were caught in the program, including 172 tiger sharks, 57 bull sharks and eight whites. A total of 346 non-target species were caught, including non-target sharks and other marine animals. We always make the point and have always held the position that we will not compromise the safety of swimmers. That is why we have a Shark Control Program.

In terms of the budget, we have put forward \$16.7 million over the next four years, with \$4.2 million of that ongoing into 2024-25, to be used in dealing with sharks and the Shark Control Program and also looking at swimmer safety in terms of other measures—whether that be drone technology, looking at swimmer safety surrounds and those sorts of areas. I will ask my director-general or the deputy director-general to expand on that.

**Mr Gee:** I think the member has a really good point in terms of the program coming together in totality. In relation to your point on predation, I will ask the deputy director-general to add a few facts.

**CHAIR:** Briefly, that would be great, thank you.

**Mr Bolton:** We are very much aware of the anecdotal reports of the shark predation model on Spanish mackerel and other fish stocks. The stock assessment model for Spanish mackerel and other stock assessments we do does include a factor 4 predation. More importantly to your question around research on shark predation, we do have a research project underway that is looking at this specific issue of predation.

**Mr PERRETT:** Minister, I refer to SDS page 2 and the \$42.5 million over four years to continue the fisheries reform process. Minister, has the department undertaken any analysis of the impact this reform process will have on the mental health of those affected?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure how you are going to answer this.

**Mr FURNER:** Like any reforms we deal with, it is difficult to understand any modelling around an impact until it is fully implemented. No doubt COVID-19 has affected a number of people in a variety of different industries. I will defer to my director-general to see whether he wants to add to that response.

**Mr Gee:** I thank the member for the question. It is a really important question not just for fisheries, but for the sector very broadly. I know you are aware of all of the QRIDA programs and what they can do with debt reduction. We have had significant contact through the minister with the Seafood Industry Association. We hope to be able to come to an agreement in the near future with them to provide a program not just about sustainability but also sustainability for themselves and their families. I hope that helps. I do not know if the deputy can take that any further.

**Mr PERRETT:** Will the department then undertake an analysis of these mental health effects?

**CHAIR:** Bear with me here. Are you talking about modelling effects on mental health? Is that what you are asking?

**Mr PERRETT:** No, will the department undertake an analysis of the mental health effects?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure if this is fully within the remit of this department. In terms of modelling, we are usually talking about economic modelling. I shall allow that question but I will allow the minister a broad brush to answer it, although it may well be better asked of the Minister for Health in a future estimates hearing.

**Mr FURNER:** It is one of those examples where under my expanded portfolio, rural communities are dealing with the Minister for Health. No doubt it will be a matter, should it eventuate, because it is to some degree a hypothetical in terms of the development of mental health. I appreciate the member's concern. We all have a concern as members of parliament about the effects of mental health, particularly in the current pandemic. I am more than happy to engage, as I do on a regular basis, with the Minister for Health on aspects that affect my portfolio. That is one of the reasons we expanded the portfolio to capture rural communities and fisheries, and persons who are involved in fisheries are no exception. I will hand to my director-general to see whether he wishes to expand on that.

**Mr Gee:** As the chair has rightly pointed out, that is not a role for our department. I can say we have spent significant resources in terms of providing training, particularly to our extension officers and our people in forestry and fisheries, around mental first aid and coming into contact with members of the industry. Their job—and they are not health professionals—is to provide contacts and a conduit, and they will continue to do that.

**Mr PERRETT:** Would a regulatory impact statement confirm the financial or personal impact of the fisheries reform?

**CHAIR:** Once again, member, this is really hard to connect. I understand it is a matter of concern. We are just struggling to connect this with the current expenditure before us. However, the minister and the DG may be prepared to talk a bit more in addition to the answers already given.

**Mr PERRETT:** I am happy to clarify that if needed.

**CHAIR:** Certainly you can clarify that.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to the SDS and obviously the \$42.5 million over four years to continue the fisheries reform process. That is how I draw the link: through the fisheries reform process to a regulatory impact statement that was recommended by the Queensland Productivity Commission.

**CHAIR:** It is talking about the impacts of that within communities. Minister, this obviously talks about those broader impacts and working with those stakeholders. Do you want to furnish any more details?

**Mr FURNER:** Sure. I thank the member for his question. DAF has complied with all regulatory procedures in relation to progressing the fisheries reforms. The government has exempted these changes from the regulatory impact statement on the basis of a post-implementation review to be commenced within two years of the implementation of the changes, as outlined in the Queensland Government Guide to Better Regulation. Through that reform process, the government has extensively consulted with all stakeholders, particularly commercial fishers, and gauged the potential economic impacts and benefits of the reforms. Once again, we will work through that process, whether it be the Queensland Seafood Industry Association or the Queensland Seafood Marketers Association. It is an area that we take seriously and we will continue engaging with those industries as a result of questions like the one the member has raised.

**Mr PERRETT:** What assistance will the state government provide for the impacts on the hundreds of small-scale, multigenerational family businesses after the introduction of the fisheries reform process on 1 September 2021?

**CHAIR:** Minister, this is a bit repetitious. I think it goes towards the same thrust of what was talked about earlier. Do you have anything to add to your previous answers?

**Mr FURNER:** Once again, the reforms are going through. It is too early to judge what the member is alluding to in respect of any alleged effects on businesses. My understanding is that the working groups have been through a process of engaging with the industry. Most of the industry is committed to the reforms. Most of the effort catch and quotas are based on the data they provide from logbooks. The first round of letters was sent out in April of this year and that proposed allocation of the quota or effort units is based on their eligible reported catch records. It is from their logbooks that they provide that information. For the information of the committee, a total of 1,096 letters were sent out. That includes 367 to crab—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Mr Chair: relevance. The question was: what assistance is the state government giving—



**CHAIR:** This is exactly where we are going.

**Mr PERRETT:** I am happy with the response.

**CHAIR:** We were just getting to the really interesting part. Minister, could you finish your answer please?

**Mr PERRETT:** I am happy to move on.

**CHAIR:** I have asked the minister to finish his answer.

**Mr FURNER:** Chair, there is assistance in my answer. I ask the interjector to be patient with respect to what I am providing. It is important to identify the volume of effort that has gone into identifying and connecting with the fishers. Once again, of the letters, 367 were sent to crab fishers, 386 to east coast inshore fishers and 343 to east coast trawl fishers. Once that allocation process is complete, commercial fishers will be able to trade and lease those new quota and effort units for up to a month ahead of the new fisheries fishing rules starting on 1 September 2021.

If they are dissatisfied with their allocation, they are able to seek an internal review of DAF's decision and that will be able to be appealed by an internal review decision of the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. Furthermore, to minimise the need for fisheries to seek review of the final allocation decision, fishers currently have a 60-day period to apply to QRIDA to independently review their catch data, resolve any data entry errors and adjust their catch history for years affected by personal injury, illness, natural disaster or biosecurity event. Without these changes, we cannot create a system of management that will ensure the future sustainability of our fishery resources.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 1, ensuring sustainable and productive fisheries, in particular quota management. Minister, what modelling has been undertaken to determine the impacts of quota management changes on commercial fishing and post-harvest businesses?

**Mr FURNER:** In part, a lot of this was delivered by the deputy director-general with regard to the modelling of fisheries and species in respect of why these decisions are made. The decisions are made purely because, unlike other states, we are not a state that has a commercial catch limit for many of our iconic species. We are doing this to have sustainable fisheries for our children and grandchildren in the future. We need to go through the process of determining what effect these changes will have on our fisheries sector through those species that, clearly, are in many cases demonstrated to be vulnerable. Once again, this will take effect from 1 September this year for those individual transferable quotas to seven species, whether that be barramundi, king threadfin, grey mackerel, school mackerel, whiting, mud crab or blue swimmer crab. Be patient and be part of the process where you can wait and see the outcomes of having a sustainable fisheries policy. I am sure that you, like me and many others, will be able to enjoy Queensland seafood into the future.

**Mr PERRETT:** I have a follow-up question to the minister. Will the introduction of quotas prop up the big industry players at the expense of small and family businesses?

**CHAIR:** Is that your question? Sorry, I thought that was a preamble.

**Mr PERRETT:** I said it was a follow-up, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** I am sure there is some argument in there. Minister, I am sure you will be able to provide an answer.

**Mr FURNER:** The data of decision-making in terms of quota is based on the logbooks that businesses provide. No doubt there will be businesses that have been in the fishing industry for many years; some may have entered just in the last several years. That data is based on the logbook data they will provide us to determine their effort or quota. Once again, if they are unhappy with that outcome, they are in a position to review that. It is a sensible approach. It is an approach that is recognised. I will hand to my director-general to add anything in addition.

**Mr Gee:** Historically, there has been no specific program to gather economic information on the commercial fishing industry. That was challenging but so we can ensure we meet Commonwealth and WTO requirements, the department developed the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. We have engaged BDO EconSearch to collect and analyse data. It will report to us on economic and social indicators across 14 commercial fisheries and one charter fishery to provide an overall picture for us. Our intention eventually will be to publish that data; it will be open and transparent. One of the great things about the Fisheries Queensland program is that there is a lot of data. In terms of those economic analyses, it is our intention to provide a post-implementation review of the reforms.

**Mr PERRETT:** I refer to SDS page 1, ensuring sustainable and productive fisheries, and DAF's vessel-tracking review. Minister, what feedback has been received from the review?

**Mr FURNER:** One process we identified in this new phase of the period of sustainable fisheries is the development of a vessel-tracking specialised group. Deputy Director-General Graeme Bolton will be on that group, and a number of people will be working through the process of identifying that. Together with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, DAF has secured up to \$3 million to assist industry to implement vessel tracking throughout QRIDA. QRIDA has been very helpful in terms of the rebates it has provided in the implementation of that.

To give confidence in the program, that data will protected. I know that in the early stages there was concern on the part of a number of fishers I engaged with—I am sure it was the same for the department—regarding release of their data. That is why in July 2019 we engaged Price Waterhouse to make sure that, through that audit, they had control measures suitably designed and effectively in place for the future.

About 1,700 vessel-tracking units are now in operation on fishery boats. That makes Queensland boats the largest commercial fishing fleet in Australia using this technology. To date, I have not heard much detail of any concern. Once again, I will hand to my director-general to see whether there is anything of particular concern that may have been raised.

**Mr Gee:** I might refer the question to my deputy.

**Mr Bolton:** We have commenced a post-implementation review of the vessel-tracking system. We have established a vessel-tracking working group made up of commercial fishers from across all of the fisheries. In addition to the post-implementation review, you are probably aware that there was an Ombudsman investigation which was discontinued. The Ombudsman did make a number of observations which we will pick up as part of the post-implementation review and present to the working group. The working group had its first meeting on 23 July. We will have follow-up meetings every month as we move through the post-implementation review. We also have an engagement hub on the department's website. The communiques, progress of the working group and the post-implementation review can be tracked on that hub.

**Mr MADDEN:** My question relates to commercial and recreational fishing apps, as referred to on page 2 of the SDS. Minister, will you outline how innovative technology supports the objectives of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy?

**Mr FURNER:** No doubt, the answers that have been provided today are a demonstration of the progress in terms of how we are dealing with a sustainable industry for fisheries. Under the Palaszczuk Labor government, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has become a very forward-looking agency in this respect. As well as trialling drones and other technologies to prevent shark attacks on swimmers at our most popular beaches, we are using technology to keep recreational, commercial and traditional fishers informed and compliant with fishing rules. Every bit as important as having the right bait and gear is having the right information about the rules and regulations for fishing. That does help keep our fisheries sustainable. It helps provide security to the thousands of workers reliant on the commercial, charter and recreational fishing sectors.

In the 2020-21 SDS we committed to continuing that work on finalising smartphone apps for both commercial and recreational fishers. Unfortunately, delivery of these apps was delayed due to the inability to engage with stakeholders because of COVID-19 travel restrictions and delays to the finalisation of fisheries reforms while the government responded to the economic and health impacts of the pandemic. The good news is that the recreational app as released in October 2020 is available for both Apple and Android systems. Delivery of the commercial fishing app is due this year, to coincide with the commencement of the next round of legislative changes, harvest strategies and other components of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

The recreational app allows fishers to: understand the fishing rules in any location with the 'Can I Fish Here?' feature; submit a photo and identify their catch through cutting-edge artificial intelligence fish recognition technology; receive Fisheries Queensland notifications including reminders about upcoming fishing closures; buy a permit to fish in Queensland's 63 stocked dams and weirs; learn more about their catch such as approximate age based on the fish size entered in the app; and contact Fisheries Queensland to submit information or make an inquiry or complaint.

Importantly, the recreational app works in remote locations or in areas of limited mobile signal reception and many of the app's features include 'Can I Fish Here?' rules and specific information can be used while offline. User privacy is protected as the app does not collect or store personal information about the user or where they are fishing and photos of fish are only used to help train the app's artificial intelligence. The commercial app will help commercial fishers to facilitate business processes and users will be able to record catches and submit electronic logbooks, including catch disposal records, and

submit quota reporting activities; notices including pre trip notices, amending notices, prior notices, emergency notices, weight notices, retained fish notices and view authorities—that is, licences as an example; view quota balance; manually report positions using GPS to meet legislative requirements if vessel tracking units fail at sea; monitor the operational status of vessel tracking units registered to the authority; and receive and review notifications from Fisheries Queensland. Individual fishers have been shown a prototype version of the commercial app, as I have, with the aim to incorporate feedback in future releases of the app. I am very impressed with this. Both commercial and recreational apps will be updated into the future. The total value of DAF's contract with the supplier is currently around \$700,000. This investment covers design, development and support and maintenance for three years.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, could you please outline how fish aggregation devices are used to support Queensland's Sustainable Fisheries Strategy?

**Mr FURNER:** I thank the member for his question. While the official term is 'fish aggregation device', many Queenslanders also know it as fish-attracting devices owing to the result they get in attracting fish. Based on a survey from 2019-20, we understand there are now close to one million recreational fishers in Queensland and we want to ensure we give them the best fishing experiences possible. Consequently, the Palaszczuk government has invested over \$1 million to roll out more than 44 FADs across Queensland. FADs are floating buoys which are tethered offshore to attract sports fish species like mahi, or dolphinfish, cobia, mackerel, wahoo, tuna and also billfish. Surface and subsurface FADs are designed to attract pelagic fish, particularly mahi mahi. Subsurface FADs are designed and positioned to also aggregate tuna and billfish throughout the winter months.

FADs increase the likelihood that recreational fishers will catch these species which helps reduce pressures on overfished species such as snapper and pearl perch. This directly supports Queensland's Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and the responses from the recreational fishers and charter fishers has been instantly positive. Charter fishing logbooks demonstrated a high use of FADs, with dolphinfish caught regularly. Snapper catches were low on trips when dolphinfish were caught, indicating a direct reduction in snapper catch when the FADs were fished, demonstrating that this investment is directly supporting sustainability of a species that is under pressure. By encouraging recreational fishers to target species other than snapper and pearl perch, we ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy fishing with these iconic Queensland species.

As well as the 25 surface FADs previously deployed in South-East Queensland waters, four surface FADs were deployed off Weipa in August 2020, 12 subsurface FADs off South-East Queensland in February 2021 and, more recently, another three surface FADs off the Fraser Coast region in June 2021. Four all-water FADs are currently being planned for deployment off Bundaberg. These all-water FADs are designed to aggregate fish throughout the entire water column and will attract a range of bait fish species such as yellowtail scad along with bottom-dwelling predatory fish such as cod, coral trout and open seas predatory fish such as mackerel and cobia.

All FADs have been developed in consultation with the commercial fishing industry to minimise the impacts on access to commercial fishing grounds and in accordance with relevant Commonwealth and state statutory requirements. Suitable locations have also been identified within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and DAF is working with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to secure the approvals required for FADs to be deployed in its marine mark. The Palaszczuk Labor government's investment in FADs has strengthened Queensland's reputation for world-class recreational fishing while providing an opportunity for snapper and pearl perch stocks to rebuild. The FADs are also playing an important role in helping some charter fishing businesses rebuild from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic while reducing the impact on overfished stocks. Recreational fishing supports local jobs along the Queensland coast, from bait and tackle shops to accommodation and tourist operations. Locations of the FADs are available on the department's website and via the recreational fishing app delivered by the government. My department will explore opportunities with potential funding partners to ensure the ongoing maintenance of FADs.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We will wrap up with one question each from our cross-benchers. The member for Mirani will go first.

**Mr ANDREW:** Deputy Director-General, we established earlier that the Spanish mackerel is a migratory fish. Page 2 of the SDS refers to \$42.5 million. How much is the government going to spend to establish what the PNG side of the catch is, because it is an unregulated catch up there, and how does that affect the quota and the biomass in Queensland to be able to clearly define that line that Queensland is not overstepping the mark?

**Mr FURNER:** Through you, Chair, obviously the practice through estimates is to go through the director-general if there is a question directed to a deputy director-general or agency.

**CHAIR:** Yes. I am assuming that that has gone to the director-general.

**Mr Gee:** I am happy for the deputy to answer.

**Mr Bolton:** Our modelling takes account of the biomass regional distribution which is limited from the tip of Cape York down through to the east coast of New South Wales and does not include the Torres Strait, which is in another jurisdiction and is managed through the protected joint authority.

**Mr ANDREW:** I have one other quick question.

**CHAIR:** A very brief follow-up.

**Mr ANDREW:** How many investment warnings has the government given to fish and chip shops and restaurants in terms of Spanish mackerel since the quota has come into play?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure if that is a strict follow-up.

**Mr ANDREW:** It is part of the Queensland economy.

**CHAIR:** Yes. I do not know if we can—

**Mr ANDREW:** It is directly related to the actual investment warnings down the line—

**CHAIR:** You are talking once again about liaising with stakeholders, which we have dealt with previously. Can anyone briefly furnish any more details about that?

**Mr ANDREW:** Have we given any investment warnings to restaurants and fish and chip shops?

**Mr Gee:** We publish data. We have not made a decision in terms of Spanish mackerel. We will go to public consultation. All I could add is that it is out there publicly. We have not made a decision. If we do, then we would consider those sorts of issues.

**CHAIR:** The member for Maiwar had a question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** As the minister identified when we bumped into each other at the by-election on the weekend, I have a question about shark control. Following the 2019 AAT orders requiring nonlethal shark control in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, I understand the federal government provided the Queensland government with \$5 million for SMART drum lines to assist with compliance. My question to the director-general is: has any of that money been spent and will it all be allocated towards new SMART drum lines?

**Mr Gee:** I thank the member for the question and refer it to the deputy, if that is okay.

**Mr Bolton:** I thank the member for the question. In terms of the money that has been provided by the Commonwealth, that will be used for a number of projects—not just the catch alert or SMART drum line trial, but that is certainly part of it. The other part is we are also looking at shark barrier trials, so we are currently in partnership with the federal government for that and we are scoping works for a barrier trial in North Queensland and will be looking to partner up with a local government for that and have allocated an additional value of about \$550,000 for a medium sized barrier, including installation. In terms of the SMART drum line or catch alert drum line, which is probably a more accurate description, the planning is well advanced on that. We received the final approval from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority on 21 June and we are now in the final phases of doing contract variations. That trial will commence in August, being next month.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Director-General, can you advise how many non-fatal shark bites have occurred at Queensland beaches that have drum lines or shark nets in place each year since they were implemented?

**Mr Gee:** I will ask the deputy to answer that.

**CHAIR:** We can place that on notice if need be. If we have the answer now, that would be great. It is a fairly specific request.

**Mr Bolton:** I will ask the minister if we can take that on notice.

**CHAIR:** Can we clarify what the question was? Non-fatal shark bites?

**Mr BERKMAN:** I can repeat it if you are interested. How many non-fatal shark bites have occurred at Queensland beaches where drum lines or shark nets have been in place since their installation?

**Mr Bolton:** To the best of my knowledge there have been no non-fatal shark incidents at beaches with Shark Control Program equipment. Since its installation in 1962 there have been two fatalities, but I am not aware of any non-fatal incidents at a beach that has the Shark Control Program.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Is the suggestion, then, that every instance of a shark bite at a beach that has drum lines or shark nets has resulted in a fatality?

**Mr Bolton:** We will take it on notice, thank you.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** It is going to be a difficult one.

**Mr BERKMAN:** If it has been taken on notice, surely that is sufficient for our purposes.

**CHAIR:** We do not know how many shark bites happen in Queensland.

**Mr FURNER:** Chair, I think your point is relevant because there are attacks by sharks that are not necessarily reported. That may be a difficult question to respond to, but we will see what we can do in regard to the question the member has raised.

**CHAIR:** My old man got a nip on the heel once at Sarina.

**Mr BERKMAN:** The question really is going to how many reported non-fatal shark bites have occurred. Obviously if it has not been reported the department cannot be expected to have any information about it. If that could be the question that is taken on notice, I would very much appreciate it.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, I think the minister, with the help of the department, will attempt to answer that as best he can. I am just forewarning you that is going to be a difficult one.

**Mr FURNER:** I do have some figures in front of me, and I hope this is relevant to the question. Since 1 July 2020 there have been 28 unprovoked shark bites across Australia resulting in 17 injuries and six deaths. The remaining five people were uninjured. During 2021 there have been no unprovoked shark bites resulting in injury or death in Queensland, but during 2021 there have been 13 unprovoked shark bites across Australia resulting in 10 injuries and one death and the remaining two people were uninjured.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I appreciate the response. The question is specifically about those non-fatal attacks that have occurred on beaches that are fitted with drum lines or shark nets. I am absolutely content for it to be taken on notice if that is possible. I accept the limitations of any answer in terms of what is being reported rather than unreported incidents, but is the minister willing to take that on notice?

**Mr FURNER:** We will take that on notice, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Minister, did you want to give a quick wrap-up from your time today?

**Mr FURNER:** I thank you, Chair, for your indulgence. Apart from that last question from the member for Maiwar, there is one question on notice. It has been reported to me that during the hearing there was a tweet from the member for Burleigh. I believe that is a reflection on this hearing. I think that is unparliamentary. I will leave that for you as chair of this committee to handle.

I thank the committee for its questions this evening. I am sure that the members have found the process illuminating in terms of the fantastic work done in this portfolio by the Palaszczuk Labor government. I reaffirm my belief that the policy areas of agriculture and fisheries should be above politics always. I encourage any members of the committee who would from time to time like more information on a particular matter within the portfolio to contact my office. I look forward to those members contacting us to provide that information.

The Palaszczuk government is getting on with the job of delivering Queensland's economic recovery plan for the benefit of all Queenslanders. I would like to thank all primary producers for their massive contribution to the fabric and fibre of this state. They are the salt of the earth. They tirelessly get out there every day to put food on our plates. Lastly, I thank once again all of the department staff who played such an important role in preparing for today's hearing for what they do each and every day for the people of Queensland. Well done. Thank you.

**CHAIR:** There was another question on notice. The director-general undertook to answer something for the member for Gympie regarding long-term contracts and timber.

**Mr Gee:** It was in relation to data on long-term native hardwood sales permits for North Queensland. There are two longer term, one until 2024 and one till 2028. There are a number of shorter term ones. I hope that helps.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. The answer to that question on notice must be provided to the secretariat by 4.45 pm on Friday, 30 July 2021. Thank you, Minister, officials and departmental officers for your attendance today. I will have a look at the member for Burleigh's social media feed and see what he said. The committee will adjourn for a short break and we will resume at 5 pm to examine the estimates of expenditure in the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.46 pm to 5.00 pm.**

## ESTIMATES—STATE DEVELOPMENT AND REGIONAL INDUSTRIES COMMITTEE—REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MANUFACTURING; WATER

### In Attendance

Hon. GJ Butcher, Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water  
Mr I Hutcheon, Chief of Staff

#### **Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water**


Mr M Glover, Acting Director-General

Mr D Wiskar, Acting Deputy Director-General, Water

#### **Sunwater**

Mr G Stockton AM, Chief Executive Officer

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 **CHAIR:** The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure in the Appropriation Bill 2021 for the portfolio areas of the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water. My name is Chris Whiting. I am the member for Bancroft and chair of the committee. The other committee members are: Mr Jim McDonald, the member for Lockyer and deputy chair of the committee; Mr Michael Hart, the member for Burleigh; Mr Robbie Katter, the member for Traeger; Mr Jim Madden, the member for Ipswich West; and Mr Tom Smith, the member for Bundaberg. The visiting members who have requested to be present today include: Mr David Crisafulli, the Leader of the Opposition and member for Broadwater; Mr David Janetzki, the member for Toowoomba South; Mr Jarrod Bleijie, the member for Kawana; Ms Fiona Simpson, the member for Maroochydore; Ms Ann Leahy, the member for Warrego; Mr Tony Perrett, the member for Gympie; Mrs Deb Frecklington, the member for Nanango; Mr Brent Mickelberg, the member for Buderim; Mr Steve Minnikin, the member for Chatsworth; Mr Jon Krause, the member for Scenic Rim; Mr Stephen Andrew, the member for Mirani; Mr Michael Berkman, the member for Maiwar; and Dr Amy MacMahon, the member for South Brisbane. The committee will examine the minister's portfolio area of Water until 6.30 pm and the estimates for the Regional Development and Manufacturing portfolio areas from 6.45 pm to 7.45 pm.

I remind those present today that this hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the standing rules and orders of the Legislative Assembly. It is important that questions and answers remain relevant and succinct. The same rules for questions that apply in parliament apply to 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 a lengthy or subjective preamble, argument or opinion. The committee has authorised its hearing to be broadcast live, televised and photographed. Copies of the committee's conditions for the broadcast of proceedings are available from the secretariat. I ask that all phones and electronic devices be switched to silent mode. Also I remind you that food and drink are not permitted in the chamber.

On behalf of the committee I welcome the minister, the director-general, the departmental officers and members of the public. 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 areas of Water, Regional Development and Manufacturing 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 three minutes.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Chair. I am certainly glad of the opportunity to speak to the committee today about the Palaszczuk government's commitment to water management in Queensland. As we deliver Queensland's economic plan to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring Queenslanders have access to a safe, secure and sustainable water supply is now more important than ever. Queensland has in place a robust water plan and a regulatory framework that protects the rights of water users and ensure that the sustainability of our rivers and catchments are protected. Long-term sustainable water security is not only vital to the health and wellbeing of Queenslanders; it is also critical to the agriculture, manufacturing and other industries that underpin the prosperity of our state. As everyone here knows, water is the lifeblood of our regional communities.

That is why I am proud of the Queensland government's ongoing investment in water infrastructure, which totals \$1.9 billion since 2015 and that has supported more than 2,300 jobs. Since last year's estimates we have made considerable progress. Most notably, in April we saw the commencement of in-river works on Rookwood Weir near Rockhampton, which is the largest new piece of water infrastructure currently under construction in Australia. That project is progressing well towards completion by the end of 2023. Thanks to an additional \$15 million investment it will be bigger and better, delivering an additional 10,000 megalitres of medium-priority water for Central Queensland. Just as importantly, the project is supporting around 300 jobs and most of those are local. Big Rocks Weir is also progressing well with the recent release of the terms of reference for the environmental impact statement for that project. This comes alongside our existing commitment of \$30 million towards making that project a reality.

However, our delivery for water users has come not only in the form of new infrastructure. Part of getting the most out of our precious water supply is ensuring water users, especially those in the agricultural industries, can access it easily and affordably to grow their businesses and create jobs. That is why the government has discounted the price of irrigation water in government owned schemes, starting with a discount of 15 per cent across all irrigators. Our horticultural growers will also soon be able to claim an extra 35 per cent rebate for the cost of water associated with horticulture. Applications for that scheme will open soon. We have also released our Queensland Water Market Optimisation action plan to free up almost one million megalitres of water that goes unused even in the driest years, getting it to work for our economy. We are continuing to take water that is unallocated in our water plans and make it available for use by agriculture and industry to boost regional economic growth.

Progress has also been made on the \$9 million Regional Water Assessment Program that was first announced at estimates last year. I can advise the committee that the first regional water assessments in the southern Darling Downs have commenced and community engagement is certainly underway. Preparations for the Bundaberg, Burnett and Tablelands assessments are also progressing well. This is a three-year program that will set up for economic growth for our most significant food bowls, giving us a strong plan for the state's water supply.

On the topic of strong plans for water security, it would be remiss of me not to mention the progress being made on Paradise Dam. The government takes its dam safety regulatory responsibilities very seriously because it protects not only the lives of Queenslanders but also water assets for the state's—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** You are calling a point of order during the minister's opening statement?

**Mr McDONALD:** It is three minutes and 30 seconds already.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I will wrap it up for you, Jim.

**CHAIR:** Refer to members by their title.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thought you would have been interested in hearing about Paradise Dam but that is okay. No doubt I will get a question about it. I thank the department and Sunwater for working tirelessly through that program. We look forward to answering questions from the committee.

**CHAIR:** We will commence with questions from the member for Traeger.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, in the interests of a reliable regional water supply and with reference to the combined efforts of the Mount Isa City Council and Cloncurry Shire Council to take ownership of the water assets in that region, could you advise what provisions have been made by the government to assist in enabling this process?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Certainly I understand that the Mount Isa City Council is in the early stages of considering the institutional arrangements relating to the delivery of water in Mount Isa and Cloncurry. Any institutional arrangement proposed would need to be carefully considered by our government to take into account the full implications of the financial viability of water entities and certainly the cost to taxpayers. In terms of what difference if any a restructure of this kind may make to water prices in Mount Isa, the proposal needs to be carefully scrutinised to determine the potential benefits or certainly the impacts on local communities and the state as a whole.

I note the Queensland government has effectively subsidised the cost of water supply to the Mount Isa Water Board and the Mount Isa City Council as 50 per cent of any dividend and the tax equivalent payments returned to government by the Mount Isa Water Board are remitted to that council. The dividend is calculated at 80 per cent of the Mount Isa Water Board's net profit. Payments to the Mount Isa City Council over the financial periods from 2010-11 to 2019-20 have ranged from around \$770,000 a year to up to \$5 million.

At this time the Queensland Treasury is examining ways of reducing the variability in the annual dividend payment, which has been causing some cash flow problems, as you are well aware and that we have talked about before, for that council. Also, the department is working with Queensland Treasury to review the north-west water proposal. As with any proposed changes of this nature, the department certainly will consider the potential benefits and impacts on local communities and the state as a whole to enable decisions on any next steps to be made.

As we have said before, I am happy to continue to engage with you; the mayor, whom I have also recently met at the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils and Flinders; relevant stakeholders who are engaged with this proposal; and others who seek to deliver water security and economic growth in regional Queensland.

**Mr KATTER:** Minister, with the planned release of 145,000 megalitres of allocation in the Flinders River by the end of the year, with particular regard to the HIPCo development, can you please advise how you will ensure a level playing field and, in particular, give an opportunity for—I will call them battlers—small operators to get some benefit out of that release?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As the member knows, I have been meeting regularly with the HIPCo group. Recently, as I said, I was in that area for the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils. I have been around and looked at the proposal firsthand and I have also met with them here at parliament.

We continue to support regional economic growth through the delivery of unallocated water—we have that around the place. As part of the strategic program developed by the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water, up to 140,000 megalitres of unallocated water, as you said, in general reserve will be released to the Flinders catchment. The government welcomes the interest by proponents, HIPCo being one of those, in assessing the water, and recognises the potential economic growth from which regional communities can certainly benefit.

Because the combined demand for water by these projects exceeds the volume of unallocated water reserved under the gulf water plan, the department is developing a competitive sale process moving forward. The department is on track to announce the terms of sale for the release of that unallocated water in that system in the general reserve in late November 2021. The outcome of the competitive sale process, which is currently in development, will decide which of the projects will receive a water licence. Any release of unallocated water will be based on science, ensuring that existing users and users will not be adversely impacted and also ensuring compliance with the gulf water plan.

**Mr KATTER:** With regard to Big Rocks Weir, there has been a commitment by the state government as a coordinated project. Can the minister please advise what the contribution has been so far to the state with an update on its progress?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I have had conversations, as you know, not only with the mayor but also with proponents up that way. I met with Mayor Frank Beveridge a few months ago in Townsville. The Palaszczuk government has a strong record of investing in water infrastructure. As I said in my opening speech, we have invested \$1.9 billion since 2015. As I also said, I will look at any project that has potential to drive economic growth and job creation.

Big Rocks Weir could boost the North Queensland economy and create jobs for the region through improved water security. It will provide up to 20,000 megalitres of water per annum and is estimated to support more than 170 jobs during construction. That is why we have committed funds to the project and fast-tracked the process. We have invested \$30 million towards pre-construction works and have committed \$27 million towards construction, subject to the detailed business case and regulatory approvals being completed.

On 29 March this year, Big Rocks Weir was declared a coordinated project by the Coordinator-General here in Queensland and just recently, on 9 July, the terms of reference for the EIS were released. This latest step now allows the proponent, the Charters Towers Regional Council, to finalise details of that project. The department, including my acting director-general, have been working closely with the council on pre-construction activities to ensure that important geotechnical and design work is complete. As I am sure you would understand, member, we certainly need to do the detailed works and the design so that we can assess this project.

When I met with the mayor earlier this year to discuss the project, he reiterated to me that the council, as the project proponent, really appreciated the assistance from my department when it comes to getting the technical work right. In fact, when Bob Katter Sr complained about the red tape, the mayor responded publicly saying that he was encouraged by his catch-up with me in Townsville and I seemed like a practical person.



**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Give yourself a rap, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I give myself a rap when I can. I can table the article that was in the *Townsville Bulletin* if the member would like to read it. He made those comments because he knows the state has committed funds to support the council. We fast-tracked the process through the Coordinator-General, and my department is working closely with the council to get the necessary pre-construction works done. Subject to approvals, the council advises that construction of the weir would still commence in 2023, and we are doing what we can to keep those things moving forward.

It is important to remember that the Commonwealth government also determined that the project would require assessment under the federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. As I have said before to not only you but also the mayor, the building of dams and weirs is certainly not a matter of banging a few Besser blocks together on top of each other. These pieces of infrastructure need to be robust and investigated and robustly built.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is good to see you here, Minister. My first question is to you. Under the Capital Statement in the budget papers, I note that your electorate is receiving close to \$26 million, including \$8.2 million in smaller capital grants. Is this your form of sports roort?

**CHAIR:** Welcome to the table, member for Nanango. Wow! That is an imputation and an inference—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is pretty fair, though, isn't it?

**CHAIR:** Member, please do not start by talking over me. You are implying an improper motive. Would you like to recast that question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, how can you justify the expense in the budget that goes directly to the Gladstone electorate? Is this one way to ensure the mayor ends up being the federal member for Flynn?

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order.

**CHAIR:** Member, you did well with the first part of it. You are asking the minister to outline the expenditure in this particular—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I note the minister is not disagreeing. If you look at the Capital Statement, Gladstone—

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, he does not talk over the top of me.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** He has not had a chance yet.

**CHAIR:** Member! Minister, would you like to respond to that in a broadbrush manner, ignoring the imputations, inferences, arguments et cetera?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I do not know if you are aware that the water provider in the Gladstone region is the Gladstone Area Water Board. They hosted a range of different projects that they do for water security for the Gladstone region. As I am sure the member would be aware—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order: I take a point with what the minister just said, given that one of these projects is a walking track.

**CHAIR:** Member, the minister has just started to answer. Let him finish the answer.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I want to make sure he is talking about the right thing.

**CHAIR:** I got the memo. Let the minister finish.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I will answer that whilst it is fresh in my mind. I am not 100 per cent sure of the detail, but for the people of the Gladstone region the Gladstone Area Water Board does provide things for the community to engage in and around the dam, and some of those would involve, I would imagine, walking tracks to look at the dam and facilities that are out there. As I said, I do not know the full detail of that point, but the Boynedale and Forty Mile Scrub walking track, which is at the back end of Awoonga Dam, provides access to and around the dam through walking tracks.

As I said before, the Gladstone Area Water Board is a fantastic organisation that continues to deliver water security for the Gladstone region. As we know, the economic benefits that the Gladstone region provides not only to the state but also to the nation are critical. We need to make sure that money is invested in water infrastructure in the Gladstone region because of benefits it could possibly have for future developments, as we have seen here in this state with Gladstone as a hydrogen hub and the future economic developments from that.

With regard to the Gladstone Area Water Board investing money in the Gladstone region, I will sit here and support any investment they make for water security in the region because of the economic benefits it brings. As you know, at any stage during investment, we should make sure that it creates opportunities. There is no better time to create opportunities in the Gladstone region coming out of COVID-19 and the economic benefits that flow from that, and water security is a big part of that.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is good to see that the minister is so passionate about the Gladstone area, noting that he is the member for Gladstone. I note again and ask the minister—I would like clarification of this—why there is \$8.26 million of smaller capital works projects for Gladstone, yet when you go to the next page you see that the Mount Isa Water Board has none, Seqwater has none and Sunwater has none. Why is it the case that only Gladstone gets nearly \$9 million of election funding promises? We know that the mayor of Gladstone is standing in the federal election. I note that this is all in this year's budget.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, recast your question for the reasons I have previously outlined.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Can the minister explain why Gladstone is the only area in Queensland to receive nearly \$9 million of smaller capital grants undefined in the budget?

**Mr BUTCHER:** If you are implying that I oversee what gets spent by Gladstone Area Water Board on small projects then that is shameful. It is unfortunate that you lost the race against the member for Callide to become the candidate for the seat of Flynn. I know it probably digs into your heart.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Chair: you have to put your hand up to lose.

**CHAIR:** Stop, member for Nanango.

**Mr McDONALD:** What is the relevance?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am just responding to the statement.

**CHAIR:** Member for Lockyer, I could have ruled that last question out of order. I am giving the minister a broad brush to answer that. I will let him continue in this vein.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The investment in these smaller projects is certainly a decision of the Gladstone Area Water Board—an independent board that does not report to me and does not have any interference from me in relation to any of the projects that they are spending \$8.2 million on. The people of Gladstone should be happy that the Gladstone Area Water Board is spending money on infrastructure.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Chair.

**CHAIR:** We have another point of order.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Could the minister clarify who the water board reports to if not to the Minister for Water?

**CHAIR:** That is a further question. That is not a point of order. You can ask that question after the minister has finished.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I think it will help the minister out.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, we are six minutes or so into questions. You are constantly interjecting over me and the minister. That is disorderly. Can I recommend to you that you cease your interjections.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I will clarify that. They are an agency under me, but they make their own decisions at a board level, including decisions about projects that they spend money on for the benefit of the Gladstone community. I do not know whether the member for Nanango has been to the Gladstone area, but if the member ever decides to come to Gladstone I would be more than happy to show her around the Gladstone Area Water Board facilities and certainly show her around Awoonga Dam. It is a fantastic place that the community is proud of. If the Gladstone Area Water Board has decided to spend money on infrastructure for the benefit of the community of Gladstone then I applaud it. I do not make decisions on what other boards—in particular, the Mount Isa Water Board—do when it comes to small projects around their dams.

It is a fact that the Gladstone Area Water Board has certainly invested in the Gladstone community and invested in—as you highlighted before—a walking track around the dam facility itself. They certainly continue to invest money in projects that we know benefit the Gladstone community.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I might move on, unfortunately, as much fun as that was.

**CHAIR:** Just ask the question with no preamble or comments.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, the member for Bundaberg has indicated in the media that if the Paradise Dam wall is lowered further and water capacity further reduced there will be 'water security there through another form of infrastructure'. Can the minister explain what that other infrastructure will be?

**CHAIR:** We have a point of order from the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order: could a record be tabled of direct quotes—if it was going to be lowered?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I cannot table my iPad.

**CHAIR:** So the point order is about the language that the—

**Mr SMITH:** If she is claiming that I have made comments and she is quoting or paraphrasing me, maybe that could be tabled.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have them here, but I just cannot table my iPad. I will turn it up.

**CHAIR:** Turn it off. That is a good idea.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have it there. That is the quote from the member for Bundaberg—the direct statement—on Channel 7 local news. I am sure the member remembers it.

**CHAIR:** The issue is the choice of language you have used. Is that correct, member for Bundaberg?

**Mr SMITH:** I would like to see the direct quote where I said 'if the dam was lowered'. That would be different to receiving a question about the three options. I would like the direct quote tabled.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, what we usually do here is: if you are making a claim, you need to verify it and you cannot do that by starting up a video. Can you recast that question, please?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I can. Given that the member for Bundaberg consistently supports the reduction of Paradise Dam by ripping down the dam wall—

**Mr SMITH:** Point of order: that goes directly against any comments I have ever made. I caution the member for Nanango that she may be deliberately misleading this committee and ask that any evidence be put forward.

**CHAIR:** I understand that you have raised a point of order. I do not find that to be a point of order. Member for Nanango, we are going to be doing this for a while so if can you find a good way to recast the question, that would be good.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I refer to the member for Bundaberg's statement—and I will directly quote the member for Bundaberg—where he says that there 'will be security there though in another form of infrastructure'. Minister, please elaborate. What is this other form of infrastructure to provide water security for the people of Bundaberg and the Burnett?

**CHAIR:** Do you have the quote so you can table it?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is a video from Channel 7 and I am more than happy to forward it to you.

**Mr SMITH:** I am happy.

**CHAIR:** We are going to allow that question. Minister, address this question in the way you see fit.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I love the opportunity to talk about Paradise Dam and the future of that dam. As I have said on a number of occasions, including during ministerial statements to the parliament in March this year, a detailed business case in relation to the future of the dam is currently underway. This will allow us to make a decision on the future of Paradise Dam by the end of the year. I reject all of the allegations from the LNP that the process is not on schedule. As I have said previously, as a consequence—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Chair: I ask that you direct the minister to answer the question asked, which was in relation to alternative infrastructure projects.

**CHAIR:** The minister has just started to answer that. Let us see where this is going. Minister, can you continue?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I have said previously, as a consequence of the repeal of the Building Queensland Act, the detailed business case was transitioned into my department to undertake and complete the process in accordance with the usual and thorough procedures governing the business

case development framework. As detailed in my ministerial statement in March, and publicly many times thereafter, the detailed business case is on track to enable a decision to be made by the end of 2021. We will not cut corners in finding the best solution to the issues at Paradise Dam because the safety of the people of the Bundaberg region and the long-term water security needs of local irrigators—

**Mr HART:** Point of order, Chair: the statements that the minister is making are not available to the committee. He is saying that he has made public statements. You already ruled that the member for Bundaberg's statements cannot be taken into account. Can we really take the minister's statement into account?

**CHAIR:** I am not sure what you are driving at here. The minister is answering the question.

**Mr HART:** It is about being fair and balanced, at the end of day. You are making rulings that apply to one side of politics and not the other.

**CHAIR:** You are in enough trouble today, member for Burleigh. I would not go down this track, if I were you. The minister is answering the question and he can continue. There is no point of order.

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I said, it was mentioned in parliament so it is in the *Hansard* record. We will not cut corners on finding the best solutions to the issues at Paradise Dam because the safety of the people of Bundaberg and the long-term water security for that area and the needs of local irrigators depends on getting this right.

Frankly, cutting corners is how we ended up in this position in the first place. I have been to Paradise Dam on a number of occasions. I regularly meet with stakeholders, whether that is in Bundaberg or here in Brisbane. I was in Bundaberg recently, in early July, just after the water allocations for the year had been announced. I met with local irrigators growing citrus plants, avocados, macadamia nuts and strawberries, and I spoke with growers. I also visited the dam and attended a gathering of the Paradise Dam Industry Forum. Members of the media were also able to see firsthand the concrete-testing samples so they could understand the truly shocking state of the compacted concrete. Chair, I take this opportunity to seek leave to table something in relation to that.

**CHAIR:** What are you tabling?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** A prop.

**CHAIR:** I do not believe that can be tabled. What is it? It is clearly not a document.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Chair, this is one of the concrete samples that was taken out of the six points at Paradise Dam that we brought to Bundaberg recently to show the growers and the media firsthand the joints in the concrete samples from Paradise Dam and the safety reasons for making that decision.

**CHAIR:** I have made a ruling regarding props. We cannot table that. However, can we put that over to the side? Members may want to have a look at it later. That must be a first in a committee hearing—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Imagine if we tried to do that.

**CHAIR:**—a lump of concrete tabled as a prop.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It is not just a lump of concrete, Chair.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** How do we know it is from there?

**Mr BUTCHER:** It is a core sample from Paradise Dam as part of the rectification works to make it safe. I thought it was a good idea to show the committee why we made the decisions to make sure that the safety works are done at Paradise Dam. As I said, I have been to Paradise Dam a number of times in the last few months. I visited the dam and attended gatherings of the industry forum that has been put together for the Bundaberg region.

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, I raise a point of order. The question was clearly about alternative infrastructure. The minister is not answering the question.

**CHAIR:** We have talked about Paradise Dam extensively.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to move on.

**CHAIR:** Minister, can you circle back to that original part of the question or we can move on?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Can I finish, Chair? In relation to the third or fourth question, as I said, the business case will come to us by the end of the year. That is on track. That will give us information and a strategy on a way forward for Paradise Dam.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, first of all, I will refer to—and you have just referred to it—the recently handed down water allocations for the 2021-22 financial year. Irrigators in the Burnett River scheme have been informed they will only get 22 per cent of their water allocations for this financial year. Because of the lack of water access and confidence in the Palaszczuk government, we know—and you will have heard—that farmers have been forced to bulldoze their crops and shut down their operations. What is the minister doing to help those Bundaberg farmers?

**CHAIR:** Firstly, bulldozing their crops—can you verify any of this, member for Nanango, besides just hearsay?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The member for Bundaberg is sitting close to you. I am quite sure that the member for Bundaberg will be able to verify that crops have been bulldozed.

**CHAIR:** He does not have to verify it; you need to.

**Mr SMITH:** I can verify how dangerous Paradise Dam is.

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Chair—

**CHAIR:** Are we getting it now?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The minister knows full well that crops have been reduced because of the water allocation. My question is: what is the minister doing to assist those farmers?

**CHAIR:** Obviously we need something verified there.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Or he can take it on notice if he wants to.

**CHAIR:** No. The minister is keen to answer that, from what I can see. He can provide an answer—once again, broadly.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am more than happy to answer that. We were expecting a large rain event this year in the wet season. The La Nina was forecast to deliver a lot of water to Queensland.

**Mr HART:** Praying for rain—is that your solution?

**CHAIR:** Welcome back, member for Burleigh. You have already been out once today. Don't tempt fate.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Somebody probably needs to pray for you, member. As I said, the area around the Burnett and Central Queensland did not get the rain that we expected in the region. Therefore, the Paradise Dam area did not have the inflow expected throughout the wet season. In relation to the water allocations—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I raise a point of order. Just to assist the committee process, I have a copy of the ABC News article that clearly states that crops have been bulldozed.

**CHAIR:** There is no point of order.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** You have asked for it, Chair. I am assisting the committee.

**CHAIR:** No, you are not actually. The minister is providing an answer. That can be provided without comment.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I raise a point of order. Respectfully, Chair, you did ask me to clarify my statement. I am now assisting the committee. It says, 'Fruit trees bulldozed, jobs cut amid raging battle over future of Queensland's Paradise Dam'.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, I have asked you to pass that along. I have already had issue with you interrupting and interjecting on the minister. Minister, please continue.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Paradise Dam is currently just under 35 per cent supply capacity. Allocations in the Burnett scheme this year are 100 per cent for high-priority customers and 22 per cent for medium-priority customers. Like many parts of the state, as I said before, the Bundaberg Burnett region has been impacted by prolonged dry periods, which have resulted in low inflows into Paradise Dam, and water allocations for the current water year were anticipated to be low.

It is important to note that Paradise Dam is only one of multiple storages supporting the Bundaberg Water Supply Scheme. Other storages include Fred Haigh Dam, Ned Churchward Weir, Bucca Weir, Ben Anderson Barrage and Kolan Barrage. If further inflows occur during the 2021-22 water year and supply levels increase, Sunwater will increase water allocations, so water storage levels will be monitored closely throughout the year. By way of example, inflow over March and April this year resulted in an increase for announced allocations in the Bundaberg Water Supply Scheme to 100 per cent for all users. This applied for the remaining period of the water year that recently ended.

The lowering of the Paradise Dam spillway was successfully completed earlier this year to mitigate the dam safety risk, as we have talked about before, and protect those downstream of the dam. Now the spillway has been recapped, the dam storage capacity has increased from 42 per cent of its full supply level to 57 per cent.

The Queensland government and Sunwater understand the importance of water security to the Bundaberg region. We are doing all we can to ensure there is as much water available as possible for irrigators and the community. This includes amending the water plan last year to maximise water allocations. Before allocations were announced for this year, Sunwater consulted with those irrigators and provided water allocation predictions to provide as much information as possible to assist irrigators in their planning for the year.

Once a decision on the future of Paradise Dam is known, Sunwater will be in a position to re-engage with the customers and confirm volumes available for future sale. In the interim, the temporary transfer market provides customers with an opportunity to mitigate the impact of lower announced allocations in line with the scheme's trading rules and their caps. Sunwater has confirmed that the temporary transfer market has been active since the start of the new water year. It is expected that the temporary transfer market will remain active until permanent water is again available for sale.

In answering one part of the member's question, irrigators in the scheme in the Burnett River area will receive a 15 per cent discount from 1 July. Horticultural growers—we know there are a substantial number of those growers in the region—will be eligible to receive a 50 per cent discount. To answer the question about what we are doing for those farmers, for the next three years we are supporting a 15 per cent discount on water charges for irrigators and a 50 per cent discount for horticultural growers.

**CHAIR:** We have this article about bulldozing trees. I know that an avocado grower on the Sunshine Coast is removing his trees in order to replace old stock with new stock. Would that be a possible reason for this?

**Mr BUTCHER:** There could be a number of reasons. Obviously, water allocation could be one, or the crops could be old stock and they want to put new varieties of trees into the ground. I am unaware of the reason why that particular person was bulldozing at this stage.

**CHAIR:** With reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you explain more fully the role of water in economic growth, particularly as we recover from this pandemic?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of water to communities and its role in driving regional economic growth. That is why our government is implementing a series of programs and projects to enhance and drive water productivity across the state and deliver the best economic outcomes for regional Queenslanders through investment in water infrastructure. This builds on nearly \$1.9 billion of investment in water infrastructure across Queensland which has supported nearly 2,300 jobs.

In order to support economic development, attract investment and create jobs, we are investing in new bulk water supply infrastructure right across the state. This includes: \$183.6 million for Rookwood Weir near Rockhampton; \$30 million towards planning and construction of Big Rocks Weir near Charters Towers; \$34.35 million towards the planning and raising of Burdekin Falls Dam; and \$13.6 million for the Granite Belt Irrigation Project near Stanthorpe. In addition to funding investment in new bulk water infrastructure in Queensland the Queensland government is helping regional water service providers, including local governments, to deliver appropriate urban water security to their communities. So far we have provided more than half of a \$420 million commitment to secure the water supply for Townsville; \$11.6 million for emergency water carting to Stanthorpe; and \$2 million to assist the Goondiwindi Regional Council manage its water supply risks.

The 2021-22 state budget also includes \$19.34 million for the Southern Downs Drought Resilience Package to improve water security for the Southern Downs region. The Queensland government has also committed \$9 million for three regional water assessments across Queensland, including the Southern Darling Downs, Bundaberg and the recently brought forward assessment for the Tablelands. These assessments will identify infrastructure and non-infrastructure options to support long-term opportunities for agriculture, industrial and urban water security and economic growth.

We are also investigating other options to maximise the use of existing precious water resources, including through the Queensland Bulk Water Opportunity Statement. For example, through the statement process it was identified that nearly one million megalitres of unused water allocations were potentially available from existing bulk water infrastructure. This volume of water represents a low-cost, high-benefit opportunity for economic development through developing Queensland water markets and improving the utilisation of existing infrastructure.

As part of this strategy, in 2020 the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water established the unallocated water hub to deliver unallocated water releases and support water users across the state to grow their business, create new job opportunities and recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Over the past year more than 6,750 megalitres of unallocated water has been released from the state's general reserve to support economic development in regional communities.

The Queensland government is also supporting agricultural jobs, opportunities and economic developments by reducing irrigation pricing in Sunwater and Seqwater owned irrigation schemes. Irrigation prices will be reduced by 50 per cent for horticultural crops and 15 per cent for all other irrigation for the next three years up until 2024. In total, \$81.6 million in support will be provided to irrigators through this initiative.

These programs and funding commitments demonstrate how the Palaszczuk government is supporting economic opportunities through investment in water services and infrastructure across the state, securing the jobs of today and growing the jobs of the future. I will be talking about many of these projects in more detail later on in the hearing.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, with reference to page 1 of the SDS, can you provide an update on how the government is supporting jobs by providing financial support to Queensland irrigators?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I know his passion for these things in Queensland. I know that, being a regional member, he is also very interested in the ways the Palaszczuk government is supporting regional Queenslanders to grow their business and create good secure jobs. Agriculture is one of Queensland's traditional economic strengths. It certainly is a major pillar of our economy and a sector that provides jobs for regional Queenslanders across the state. Supporting the industry is a priority for this government. This support is even more important as we deliver our economic plan to build back better from the global COVID-19 pandemic. That is why the Palaszczuk government has allocated \$81.6 million over the next three years to subsidise those irrigators I talked about before. That \$81.6 million commitment includes funding to reduce irrigator prices by up to 50 per cent to reduce that cost to those irrigators.

In defining the crops eligible for the 50 per cent discount we have listened to stakeholders and defined horticulture in the broadest possible sense to maximise the benefit to those customers. The definition of horticulture crops for the purpose of the 50 per cent discount is based on the Australian and New Zealand Industry Classification Codes. As well as the usual fruit and vegetable production, these codes include nursery and floriculture production, mushroom production and tree nut growing. This definition is also consistent with the Commonwealth Government's definition of horticulture for the purpose of the federal horticulture levy.

The Queensland government is pleased to deliver these price discounts for irrigators right across Queensland over the next three years to support jobs and growth in regional economies. The 15 per cent discount is already locked in through the irrigation prices the government has set for the next three years. Irrigators will not have to do anything to access the 15 per cent discount: it will be automatically applied to the next bill. The discount will be applied to part A through to part D charges. The Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water is now focused on implementing the rebate to deliver the additional 35 per cent discount that will provide the total 50 per cent discount for horticultural production.

I have appointed the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority—or QRIDA—to administer the horticulture program, which has a long history of providing these types of services to Queensland irrigators through other programs. Following consultation with all key stakeholders on the design of the rebate program, the department is on track to start accepting those applications in early August 2021 to coincide with the first bills of the 2021-22 financial year. I have asked that the rebate program be simple and flexible enough to accommodate all forms of horticulture farm businesses and water entitlement arrangements right across the state.

On top of discounted prices to support jobs, the Queensland government provides other measures to support Queensland irrigators. There is budget funding over the next three years out to 2023-24 to maintain a longstanding policy which allows prices for many water supply schemes to be below cost recovery levels even before the discounts are applied. In addition, the Queensland government decided last year that it would fund irrigators a share of \$42 million worth of dam safety upgrade costs identified over the four-year period from 2020-21. The government will continue to subsidise irrigators' share of dam safety upgrade costs on an ongoing basis rather than ask irrigators to contribute towards them. This government remains committed to providing financial support for all irrigators supplied by Sunwater and Seqwater and to support jobs right across the region.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you please outline the steps taken by the Queensland government to deliver additional water to the Rookwood Weir project?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the honourable member for the question. I know that he is certainly passionate about his region of Bundaberg and where we are going with water for that area. As Minister for Water, I am certainly focused on improving water security for Queenslanders right around the state, but as the member for Gladstone I also have a particular interest in water security in the whole of the Central Queensland and Wide Bay area. That is why I am proud to say that the Rookwood Weir project has always been a priority for the Queensland government because we understand the importance of water security in underpinning economic development in Central Queensland.

Rookwood Weir will provide significant opportunities for increased agriculture and industrial development and boost water security for the Capricorn Coast and Gladstone communities. In 2017 the Commonwealth and Queensland governments committed \$176.1 million each to the project. The Palaszczuk government got behind this project early and backed up our 2017 commitment by putting our money on the table to allow detailed planning and design and on-ground works to proceed. This has proven to be critical in keeping the project on track, given the first Commonwealth funding towards the project was only allocated in 2021.

Our early investment enabled essential road and bridge upgrades to be completed and an alliance to be formed for water delivery of the weir consisting of Sunwater in partnership with GHD Group as the designer and McCosker Contracting and Acciona as the constructors. During the detailed design phase of the project, the construction partners identified an opportunity to raise the crest height of the Rookwood Weir by 700 millimetres, increasing the yield to 86,000 megalitres for water users. The Queensland government acted swiftly to take up this opportunity and approached the federal government to co-contribute to the additional costs. I would like to thank the former deputy prime minister, Michael McCormack, for acting swiftly to secure that additional federal funding after the Queensland government had committed more funding to that project.

**Mr HART:** Lowered it then raised it.

**CHAIR:** Order! I have already talked to people about ceasing their interjections.

**Mr HART:** Well, get the facts.

**CHAIR:** The minister will continue.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I have to say: it is disappointing that the water portfolio no longer has a seat at the federal cabinet table. In Queensland we certainly hope this does not have a negative impact on funding for important projects, because the Queensland and Australian governments increased their funding commitment to \$183.6 million each, bringing the project total to \$367.2 million. The extra height provides an additional 10,000 megalitres of medium priority water. Raising Rookwood Weir means that the Foleyvale Bridge will also need to be upgraded to accommodate the increased level of inundation. This project will add another 15 full-time jobs, on top of the 100 jobs that are already created for essential road and bridge upgrades and the 200 jobs which will be created to build the weir itself. At least 140 of the weir jobs will be sourced locally—a big win for the local economy.

In planning for the future, the Queensland government is ensuring that all water allocation and planning actions are keeping pace with the weir construction. A water plan amendment process started in April 2020 and was finalised on 18 June 2021 following review of public submissions. In parallel with the planning process, Sunwater released its first invitation to tender for water sales last year. In December 2020 I announced that the first 30,000 megalitres were sold, with the successful bidders, Rural Funds Management and Argyle Capital Partners, pursuing expansion plans right along the Fitzroy River. There will be a second tender for 7,500 megalitres in smaller lots of less than 500 megalitres which will be open to all and commence in 2022.

Since 2015 the Queensland government has committed almost \$1.9 billion to bulk water infrastructure like Rookwood Weir, the Haughton pipeline and the Mareeba-Dimbulah improvement project. It is the Palaszczuk government that has consistently gotten on with the job of delivering Rookwood Weir and committed to providing economic and employment opportunities for Central Queensland.

**CHAIR:** We have talked about the money, the planning, the design and the history as a joint project. Can we flesh out a bit more about the status and the important construction milestones that we have had and we will see in the future?



**Mr HART:** Especially the lowering first. That would be good.

**CHAIR:** Member for Burleigh, you will be warned under the standing orders again. You may get to be the first person thrown out twice in a day. The next time will be a warning under the standing orders.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the chair for his question. I know that he understands that investment in projects like Rookwood Weir not only delivers improved water security for the region but also stimulates the local economy and creates jobs. I am pleased to provide an update on the status of the Rookwood Weir project for you which, as I said before, is a \$367.2 million project co-funded by the Queensland and Australian governments—\$140 million of which we expect to spend this financial year.

As I mentioned, Rookwood Weir will provide significant opportunities for increased agriculture and industrial development and boost water security for the Capricorn Coast and Gladstone communities, particularly those industrial users in the Gladstone region. Construction along with the ancillary works, like roads and river crossings, are also creating local job opportunities when we need them most. Road upgrades—the Thirsty Creek Road upgrade by the Rockhampton Regional Council and the Capricorn Highway intersection upgrade at Gogango by Civil Mining & Construction—were completed in 2020 and created 28 and 36 jobs respectively for Central Queensland workers, while the new Riverslea Bridge has been completed by Civil Mining & Construction and employed 36 local people. All three levels of government came together on 6 May 2021 to mark the opening of the bridge and to hand it over to Mayor Tony Williams and the Rockhampton Regional Council.

An upgrade to Hanrahan Crossing is due to commence this year and be completed in early 2022 and is expected to create 12 local jobs. An upgrade to the Foleyvale Bridge is currently being planned and construction is expected to commence in early 2022. It is expected to create a further 15 jobs. Contractors for both Hanrahan Crossing and the Foleyvale Bridge upgrade will be appointed in due course.

Great progress is also being made at the weir site. The temporary works camp—or, as people call it, ‘Rookwoodville’—was designed to accommodate up to 250 project workers and staff and was established and fully functioning in March 2021. Located 16 kilometres north of Gogango, the camp provides quarters for workers, meaning they will not be travelling long distances to and from the site before and after shifts, reducing traffic for locals and fatigue risks for those workers.

I was pleased to be on site in April 2021 with the former deputy prime minister, the Hon. Michael McCormack MP, to announce the start of the in-river construction works for the weir itself. The main works undertaken to date at the weir site have been bulk excavation works on the left- and right-hand banks of the Fitzroy River, resulting in some 350,000 cubic metres of dirt being removed so far. The project has also seen the establishment of rock-crushing and concrete-batching plants on site and the commencement of concrete batch plant trials by the alliance. Works have also commenced in relation to the installation of the cofferdam on the left bank and preparations have been undertaken so that work can start on the foundations of the weir. A temporary river crossing has also been completed so that the site vehicles can travel across the river at the weir site to minimise traffic as well as wear and tear on local roads.

The project has created over 100 regional jobs to date, including through essential road and bridge upgrades that support the project. The construction of the weir itself is expected to provide a further 200 jobs, with 140 of these jobs sourced locally, and apprentices and trainees are expected to make up to 15 per cent of the construction hours. Work at the weir site has just passed the 20 per cent completion mark, so we are on track to deliver the weir as planned by mid-2023, weather permitting—though, as Minister for Water, I would always welcome a little more rain in any of our key catchment areas as discussed before.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, can you advise how the Mareeba-Dimbulah Water Supply Scheme Efficiency Improvement Project is delivering additional affordable water to local irrigators?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As the member knows and as we have said before, water is certainly the lifeblood of regional communities and a key ingredient to their economic growth. That is why, as I said before, we have invested \$1.9 billion in infrastructure since 2015.

Earlier this year, I was pleased to see firsthand some of these projects up in that area when I visited Sunwater’s Mareeba-Dimbulah efficiency improvement project on the Atherton Tablelands. I know that it is a project that Mareeba Shire Council Mayor Angela Toppin certainly is very excited about as an opportunity to stimulate the economic activity in that region.

The Mareeba-Dimbulah water supply scheme supports around 17,000 hectares of irrigated agriculture across the Atherton Tablelands. Sunwater has allocated \$19.2 million of funding for the project, with the Commonwealth providing a further \$11.6 million. I am pleased to report to the member that 18 Queenslanders are already benefiting from jobs on this \$30.8 million project, which aims to improve operating and distribution efficiencies and reduce water losses for the Mareeba-Dimbulah irrigators. As I said, the support up there for this project has been huge.

As I said, the project will improve the scheme's operational efficiencies by providing the ability to manage the flows and oversee the system's operation in real time. The works to modernise the infrastructure and increase the reliability of the system are expected to deliver a savings of greater than 8,000 megalitres of water per year. That water, once converted to tradeable water allocations, can then be purchased by irrigators who are looking to expand their agricultural businesses and to grow higher value crops that need more reliable water supplies. Not only will this benefit those irrigators but it will also stimulate further economic growth and job opportunities in the local communities around Mareeba. Providing additional water supplies by increasing the efficiencies of existing schemes of infrastructure will be the most economically effective way of meeting the area's growing water demands.

A detailed cost-benefit analysis undertaken for the project estimated the project will have a benefit-cost ratio of greater than 1.7, giving it a significant public benefit. Sunwater advises that during construction 45 full-time equivalent jobs have been supported, many of which are supporting local contractors and suppliers such as crane services and concreters. I am advised that HEH Civil Pty Ltd, a local contractor from Mareeba, was awarded the pipeline installation contract and many other local contractors and suppliers are also engaged in the project such as Neil Stafford Concreting and Mareeba Crane Hire.

The project is progressing well despite the challenges of the last wet season and the impacts that COVID-19 has had on supplying materials and staff to that area. So far approximately 14 kilometres of open channel has been converted to pressurised pipeline; the capacity of balancing storage has been increased by seven megalitres; four flume gates and 25 automated control gates have been installed; and 57 customer offtakes upgraded. I am pleased to report that Sunwater is certainly on track to complete the project by mid-2022. I look forward to visiting that region once again once the project reaches its conclusion.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question to the director-general. How many years of dam operation is assumed when determining the cost-benefit analysis in the construction of a new dam for Queensland?

**CHAIR:** I am interested to see where this is going and how this relates to the budget estimates. Director-general, is that something—

**Mr Glover:** That is all part of a detailed business case approval for dam construction, which we go through. The Palaszczuk government understands the importance of water to communities and to driving regional economic growth. Typically, water projects cost millions of dollars to develop and to operate. The development of correct projects optimises investment costs and keeps downward pressure on water prices for irrigators and all other water users—a key to ensuring that the government investment of optimised efficiencies is realised in a robust and professional business case framework. The Palaszczuk government is committed to ensuring that the economic benefits and cost, technical feasibilities and environmental impacts are thoroughly assessed when considering new water projects.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Mr Chair. With the greatest respect, Mr Director-general, the question was quite simple and pointed to how many years of dam operation, so the length of time that the Queensland government determines to be the life span of a dam in Queensland.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, I appreciate that question. It is specific, but the answer could be broad ranging as well. Once again, because I am struggling to see how this relates to the expenditure before us, I am allowing the director-general to continue with his answer.

**Mr Glover:** These requirements of the National Water Initiative are expected by the National Water Grid Authority themselves. It is not a simple question of how many years; it is complexity through the business cases themselves.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, why is only a 30-year life span factored in when considering the recovery of the full cost of dam construction and operation as dictated by the then minister, Mr Dick?

**CHAIR:** You are talking about a 30-year life span?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am. I am asking if the minister agrees with that assumption that dams in Queensland only last 30 years.

**CHAIR:** You are saying the source of that is the Treasurer?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, and I have the documents here.

**CHAIR:** That would be useful.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The national water infrastructure initiative that was set up in 2004 gives us a standard that we follow here in Queensland in relation to dam infrastructure. That standard was set up and, as the member knows, dams in Queensland are set up to ensure we continue to deliver good water security in regional Queensland and all of Queensland to ensure we can deliver—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order. For the minister's assistance, I am not talking about the national water—what I am talking about is the Palaszczuk government's determination when preparing a cost-benefit analysis for a dam—

**CHAIR:** Member, your point of order is about relevance.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is relevance.

**CHAIR:** I understand. I am listening carefully to see where we are going with this. I am allowing the minister to continue at this point.

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I said before, it is a federal standard that is used across all states set by the federal government.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, can I ask again: do you agree with Treasurer Dick that the life span of a dam in Queensland is only 30 years? If so, could I please table for your relevance a document showing dams across the world that last for a lot longer and have survived a lot longer than 30 years?

**CHAIR:** Member, you have asked for an opinion. You are struggling to connect that to policy. Your question was about the life span of dams. I think the minister has answered that. Minister, do you want to answer that in the manner you see fit?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I said, it is a federal standard set across all states. If the member has a problem with it, she should go and talk to her federal colleagues, including the water minister—I think he is still the minister—about why they have set up a 30-year standard for all states. If we look at Somerset Dam in Queensland, as we know, it is one of the oldest dams in Queensland and it is an absolutely fantastic facility. We support those and not only do we support them—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is 68 years old, Minister.

**Mr BUTCHER:**—but we continue to invest in dam safety to ensure they can be used for future water infrastructure and for water security here in Queensland. We make that investment in Queensland. We are doing it to Burdekin Falls Dam; we are investing in the safety there. It is our biggest dam in Queensland. Not only are we investing money to ensure that dam continues to be safe, but we are also looking at options for the potential raising of Burdekin Falls Dam. These are the types of things we can do in Queensland. To give a bit more information for the member I would like to defer to the acting Deputy Director-General for Water, Mr David Wiskar.

**CHAIR:** If you could furnish us with that first document referring to a statement by the Treasurer, that would be great.

**Mr Wiskar:** The consideration of dams, as the minister has already stated, is dealt with through a number of national standards, and accounting treatments are driven by the Australian accounting standards. As those business cases that the minister referred to are developed, those standards are used in the development of those considerations so that government can make prudent decisions about the use of public moneys. In Queensland a key to ensuring that those investments are optimised is robust and professional business cases to those standards. Those business cases take into account economic benefits and cost, and they look at technical feasibility and key issues including environmental implications. It is important that robust, evidence based business cases are used in project assessments, because public monies are something that we all need to have consideration for.

One of the things that is important is that fast-tracking or accelerating commitments to a project leads to additional risks and can ultimately lead to benefits being eroded or failing to eventuate. That is why those frameworks and rules exist around the business cases and why they are important for the prudent use of public moneys.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have a question for the CEO of Sunwater, Mr Stockton.

**CHAIR:** I just note that we have here a document relating to the business case cost-benefit analysis summary. It says '30-year cost recovery' for dams. Is that what you were referring to?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes, it was.

**CHAIR:** So it is a bit different to the 30-year life. The 30-year cost recovery is what you are referring to?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The Palaszczuk government use a 30-year time frame, a lifeline, in assessing whether or not dams should be built. A perfect example is Nullinga. That analysis was used to rule out the Nullinga Dam in Cairns, which is what I am talking about.

**CHAIR:** I am looking for it here. I can see words about to cost recovery, but that is very different. Be that as it may, that is the document that has been referred to.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** From Building Queensland. I can refer you to that.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My question is to the CEO of Sunwater. I note that the alternative water feasibility for the Burnett—that was done by Jacobs last year—had the Barlil Weir as a highly rated alternative for water security in that region. Is the Barlil Weir still on Sunwater's priority list to be built?

**CHAIR:** We have here a number of documents which we will table later on. Minister, did you need the business case tabled now?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Yes.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to move that it be tabled.

**CHAIR:** That is tabled. Can that be distributed to the minister at the table? Mr Stockton?

**Mr Stockton:** In 2018 Sunwater was approached by several irrigation customers on the Barker Barambah scheme seeking to explore the development of Barlil Weir, a project that Sunwater had identified as a possible new supply source in the early 2000s. Sunwater has updated the weir's design to meet current standards and reviewed the additional approvals that are required to advance a project such as this.

Sunwater developed an application for grant funding from the National Water Infrastructure Development Fund to support the construction of the weir. As part of this work, an economic cost-benefit ratio was calculated at 0.2 which, in discussion with the department, was determined as insufficient to support a grant funding application. Sunwater communicated that outcome to our customers. We continue to work with them on making improvements to the scheme to increase the value of the services that could be provided.

Barlil Weir continues to be assessed by Sunwater on an ongoing basis for its future potential benefits. It is an option that we believe is likely to be identified as an opportunity for further planning through upcoming regional water assessments. I understand that it will be taken into account through those regional water assessments.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you. Minister, if a cane farmer plants one row of broccoli among their cane, does this mean that they can access the 50 per cent discount for their irrigation water?

**CHAIR:** Member, we obviously will go through this, but we have a number of claims here and we are finding it hard to verify some of those.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Chair, I am quite sure the minister will verify that one!

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much. I am making a general point. If you are making these statements, verify them and connect them to the budget. Minister?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for the question. We know that, as we have talked about before, reducing irrigation water costs means more crops, more value and, most importantly, more jobs. That is why we have invested \$81.6 million over three years to help farmers with irrigation costs. We have helped farmers through flood, drought and bushfires, and now we will help them recover from COVID-19. Our irrigation discounts build on this, delivering a 15 per cent decrease in irrigation water charges and 50 per cent for horticultural growers. These discounts will apply for the next three years. The discounts follow on from our government's existing water price relief measures, such as freezing water prices last year during COVID and continuing to absorb dam safety costs. These measures alone save an average irrigator around \$2½ thousand.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Mr Chair: I ask you to direct the minister to answer the question. He is simply rabbiting on about his policy when the question was quite clear.

**CHAIR:** Your point is relevance?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is relevance. If you do not know the answer—

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member. The point is relevance. I am sure the minister is coming to that particular answer.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Chair. To give a bit more detail on how the assessments will be done in relation to discounts with one row of broccoli, I will hand over to my Acting Deputy Director-General for Water, Mr David Wiskar.

**Mr Wiskar:** We have been working actively with irrigators and QRIDA to identify the effective implementation of the 35 per cent discount for horticultural growers. Growers throughout the state are very familiar with QRIDA and are used to working with them. Our objective has been to ensure that the implementation of the policy is as simple and straightforward as possible for irrigators, particularly those eligible horticulture growers who will be able to claim the additional 35 per cent discount.

As the minister has previously stated, all irrigators supplied by Sunwater and Seqwater owned schemes will automatically benefit from the 15 per cent price cut for three years, including the part A and part B charges that Sunwater charges. All horticultural crops are eligible for the additional 35 per cent discount through a rebate program administered by QRIDA. We have consulted with stakeholders and we consider that QRIDA is the most appropriate entity to administer the rebate program because it is straightforward and familiar to many Queenslanders, particularly those in regional Queensland who have used QRIDA for other purposes in the past.

The rebate program is expected to start accepting applications in early August 2021, to coincide with the first bills of the 2021-22 financial year. QRIDA will assess the application and undertake the appropriate governance to ensure that the policy objectives of the government are administered and are fair and effective for all users. Irrigators will be required to demonstrate what they are growing through appropriate documentation, including receipts and photographs. As a rural member, the member may well be aware of the arrangements around drought rebate and how the evidence for that is gathered. A similar approach will be used for the QRIDA assessment for the discount policy that the government has introduced for horticultural irrigators, and all water used for horticulture can be claimed.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Excellent, so cane growers can become broccoli growers! Is that the plan—wipe out the cane industry?

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. Member for Nanango, you have been warned about interjections. Please cease your interjections. Next time there will be a warning under the standing orders.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you please provide an update on how the Gladstone Area Water Board and the Mount Isa Water Board are supporting regional Queensland by improving water security and the effective and safe operation of their infrastructure?

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for the question, and I could talk about the Gladstone region for the rest of the night if you would like. The Gladstone Area Water Board and the Mount Isa Water Board continue to support regional Queensland through the projects identified in this year's budget. In total, the Gladstone Area Water Board is expected to invest \$25.7 million in capital infrastructure in the 2021-22 financial year. A key project being undertaken over the next 12 months is the progression of planning works for the Gladstone-Fitzroy Pipeline to continue investigating improvements in long-term water security for the area. To achieve this, the Gladstone Area Water Board is investing \$2 million in these investigations.

Over the course of this financial year, the Gladstone Area Water Board is expected to complete a number of key projects. These include the Kirkwood Pump Station project where the Gladstone Area Water Board is investing over \$2.3 million this year as part of a \$6 million overall investment to build a booster pump station to supply treated water to the Gladstone Regional Council reservoir. Additionally, the Gladstone Area Water Board will invest over \$2 million in a renewals project at the Gladstone Water Treatment Plant, including replacement of water filtration systems. This will ensure that water can continue to be treated to a high standard for customers in the area.

The Gladstone Area Water Board is also investing \$4.2 million this year in completing construction of the new \$10.8 million fish hatchery to replenish fish stocks at Awoonga Dam, consistent with regulatory requirements. This hatchery project will also support employment, education and recreational fishing opportunities for Gladstone residents. The Gladstone Area Water Board supports local jobs and the economy by applying a weighting of up to 30 per cent to the tender evaluation criteria for locality as part of the procurement process. The main contract for the Kirkwood Pump Station project has been awarded to a local contractor, Pensar Industries. The construction contract for the building and envelope for the new hatchery has also been awarded to local contractor LBS Pty Ltd.

In the north-west of the state, the Mount Isa Water Board is forecast to invest \$5.7 million in capital improvements in the 2021-22 financial year. A key focus of this investment will be the renewal of ageing infrastructure to ensure reliable water supplies into the future. Projects include a \$2.6 million investment in overhauling the electromechanical equipment and high-voltage yard in Fred Haig pump

station. A further \$556,000 will be invested to renew pumps in the Lake Moondarra deep well pump station. Both projects will deliver improved supply reliability and efficiency. I am advised that a further \$386,000 is anticipated to be spent on providing a diesel backup supply for Mount Isa City Council's supply of water. This will help to ensure resilience of water supplies during any power interruptions. For the information of the member, the Mount Isa Water Board has a five-person in-house locally based capital works team that is made up of the project managers, engineers, supervisors and technical support staff. In addition to these permanent local staff, approximately 19 jobs drawn from both the local community and the broader state, including trades and transport workers, will be required for these projects. Local contractors and equipment providers are planned to be used on earthworks, concreting, electrical, fitting, lifting, haulage and steel fabrication works.

Similar to the Gladstone Area Water Board, Mount Isa, Seqwater and Sunwater all maintain a capital works program that maintains infrastructure in electorates right across the state. They are all detailed in Budget Paper No. 3, just presented under a different name. The Gladstone Area Water Board funds its own capex infrastructure that is monitored by the QCA to provide confidence to customers that the costs are prudent and they are efficient. Like Seqwater and Sunwater, the Gladstone Area Water Board allocated funds each year to recreational facilities because of the community benefit that they provide. As the member can see, these are all important projects that you would expect the Gladstone Area Water Board and the Mount Isa Water Board to fund. It certainly shows that the member for Nanango's earlier question was nothing but baseless and outrageous.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do not think so. It is still here.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, members. The member for Mirani has a question.

**Mr ANDREW:** With regard to page 2 of the SDS in terms of the \$70 million worth of infrastructure planned out over the next few years, I want to ask the minister about Mount Morgan as it has dropped below nine per cent, the options available to correct that situation with Mount Morgan and the time line that we would be looking at. There are a lot of very concerned people there.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the honourable member for the question. As we have heard loud and clear, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, our Premier and Minister for Trade, is committed to ensuring that Queensland families will not run out of drinking water. In March 2021 and again in May 2021 I met with the Mayor of Rockhampton, Mr Tony Williams, to discuss the issue of water security for Mount Morgan and I have certainly met with you on a few occasions now to discuss options moving forward. My department is currently considering an application from the Rockhampton Regional Council for financial assistance for the ongoing water carting that we know that they have started already. This process involves an independent financial assessment by the Queensland Treasury Corporation in collaboration with a number of Queensland government departments over the coming months.

While urban water supply is the responsibility of local councils, the government will certainly consider support for councils if it is required under that process. The Palaszczuk Labor government has previously supported councils that have had to bear the costs of carting due to severe drought conditions. To ensure future water security for the Mount Morgan community, a pipeline is one of the options that is being considered by the council and I am pleased to see that the Rockhampton Regional Council has committed funds to undertake a business case for its proposed pipeline that it has been talking about. When that work has been done, it will be in a place to engage further with me and the state government.

In the meantime, the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water will continue to engage with the council to provide any additional support that is required for that council. I do note the mayor's public support of the new \$70 million round 6 of Building our Regions funding for water and sewerage infrastructure and continued investment in Works for Queensland announced recently in the state budget. These programs may provide funding opportunities for the final decision following the completion of their business case moving forward. The Palaszczuk government is fully committed to water security right throughout Central Queensland. That is why, as we have talked about earlier today, we have committed \$183.6 million towards the construction of the Rookwood Weir. It is only because our government put our money on the table that that project is now underway.

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, one question.

**Mr BERKMAN:** My question is to the director-general in relation to the department's water resource management services as set out in the SDS at pages 2 and 4, and I note that associated water is a matter regulated by the department of environment, so leave that aside in answering the question. Broadly speaking, can a large take of water—say, a gigalitre or more—be commercial in confidence or would any take like this require a licence or other authorisation under the Water Act that would ordinarily be included in a public register?

**CHAIR:** Did you want to be specific instead of the hypothetical? Member for Maiwar, I think I know where you are going with this.

**Mr BERKMAN:** It is a simple question. Can a large take of water be commercial in confidence or would it require a licence or authorisation that is included on a public register? It is a pretty straightforward question.

**CHAIR:** I think it is, but you need to be specific. It is a hypothetical unless you name it.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am sorry?

**CHAIR:** It is hypothetical. You have to be specific.

**Mr BERKMAN:** It is a very direct question. Can you take water in Queensland in large volumes without a licence or authorisation that would be included on a public register?

**CHAIR:** Member for Maiwar, as you know with standing orders, you are asking for an opinion and it could be classed as a hypothetical, but I think the DG is going to give a brief answer on that as he may desire.

**Mr Glover:** Thank you for the question, member. Private water trading agreements can be established between water users. In Queensland, water trading is available where water allocations have been established under a water plan. Rules for water sharing and trading of allocations are set out in the water management protocols associated with the water plan of each area.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Thank you. A quick follow-up, if I might: in light of that answer, can you please provide details of all water licences held by Adani—or Bravus as it now calls itself—and details of any sources of water that Adani is authorised to access in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** That is a big question as well. It is a massive one. I wish you had started with this one. We could have got straight to the point.

**Mr BERKMAN:** I am happy for it to be taken on notice.

**CHAIR:** Do you want to make a comment on this? It is a fairly large request. How it relates to the budget I am not sure.

**Mr BERKMAN:** Chair, water resource management is a function of the department.

**CHAIR:** I do not need your input on that, member. Director-General, do you want to give a partial response to that?

**Mr Glover:** The department has no further information to provide on Bravus Mining & Resources' intentions for sourcing water for their Carmichael Mine project.

**CHAIR:** The time allocated for the consideration of estimates of expenditure in the portfolio area of water has expired. There are no questions on notice. The committee will now adjourn for a short break and the hearing will resume at 6.45.

#### **Proceedings suspended from 6.30 pm to 6.45 pm.**



**CHAIR:** Welcome back, Minister and officials. The committee will now examine the proposed expenditure for the regional development and manufacturing portfolio until 7.45 pm. We do have a couple of documents to table. The member for Lockyer and the member for Bundaberg have tabled documents on the same issue. They do not offend standing orders. Also I have a letter from the member for Noosa, who could not be here today. The Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities did not table it and he needed me to table it. I will table that. Minister, if you wish you can make an opening statement of no more than three minutes.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you, Chair. What a busy seven months it has been for the regional development and manufacturing portfolio since last estimates in December—for good reason. The Palaszczuk government continues to be focused on supporting the Queensland manufacturing industry as we deliver Queensland's economic plan to build back better from the global COVID-19 pandemic. That support is certainly paying off. The strength and resilience of the manufacturing sector has continued to grow, with the sector now employing almost 178,000 people—an increase of more than 13,000 people since this time last year. Importantly, 85 per cent of those jobs are full-time. Queensland's manufacturing industry is also adding \$21.5 billion to our economy annually. These are certainly impressive figures, made even more impressive by the fact that Queensland now employs more than 20 per cent of all manufacturing workers in Australia.

Without question, this government's plan to make Queensland Australia's premier manufacturing state is working. We are supporting manufacturers to tap into more domestic and international markets and create more manufacturing jobs right across the state of Queensland. We are doing this through

programs like the flagship \$61.5 million Made in Queensland initiative. Made in Queensland has supported 84 advanced manufacturing projects across the state since 2017 and is expected to create more than 1,100 jobs<sup>1</sup> over five years and generate more than \$100 million in private sector investment. The fourth round was opened recently and received a record 174 applications, including 49 from regional manufacturers.

Our focus on supporting regional manufacturers has continued, with the recent opening of the Gold Coast manufacturing hub. Like all our manufacturing hubs, the Gold Coast hub will work closely with local manufacturers, providing tailored development programs and specialised training. For the Gold Coast this will mean a focus on marine transport equipment and vehicle manufacturing, food processing and metal fabrication, meeting the needs of the Gold Coast manufacturing community.

The Mackay manufacturing hub, which will focus on growing mining equipment, technology and services—METS—resource recovery and agriculture sectors in the Mackay-Isaac-Whitsunday region is on track to open shortly. These join existing hubs in Cairns, Townsville, Rockhampton and Gladstone which are all building a strong legacy in their regions. Once established, they will also further grow our Manufacturing Hubs Grants Program. The \$13.5 million for manufacturing hub grants across our existing locations is already substantially committed, with \$9.1 million allocated to 34 regional manufacturers, creating 184 jobs and protecting over 1,000 more. These initiatives bring our total commitment to delivering tailored support and expertise for regional manufacturers to \$38.5 million.

My department has also continued a wide range of other industry support programs under the Advanced Manufacturing 10-Year Roadmap and Action Plan. Notable amongst these is the Women in Manufacturing event series, which aims to increase diversity in the manufacturing sector by connecting and showcasing female manufacturers. Currently around one in four Queensland manufacturers are women, a figure we hope to increase with programs just like this one.

Before I finish, I want to briefly mention our government's ongoing commitment to Queensland's craft brewing industry. Queensland's craft brewing industry has seen rapid growth and our state is now home to more than 100 craft brewers, with almost a quarter of these in regional Queensland. It employs more than 1,700 Queenslanders and contributes \$62 million each year to our economy.

**CHAIR:** I foreshadow that I will be asking a question on that particular issue.

**Mr McDONALD:** That was nearly four minutes.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for his leniency.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I table a press release from the minister in regard to the government's 25 per cent of all PPE to be bought by the Queensland government. My question to the minister is can the minister advise if this 25 per cent PPE target applies to all government departments?

**CHAIR:** We will table that. Can we get a copy of this?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Yes. It is the minister's press statement.

**Mr BUTCHER:** The simple answer to that is, yes.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** To confirm, Minister, the government's policy of buying 25 per cent of PPE from Queensland manufacturers applies to Queensland Health?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Certainly we are working very closely with the Deputy Premier and the department of state development under our program to manufacture masks, in particular. During the height of the pandemic last year, we saw opportunities coming forward for those essential goods. Certainly the 25 per cent is a target we have set in Queensland.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** To confirm—

**CHAIR:** No, member. The minister is still talking. Minister, you were talking about a target?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Yes. Certainly the 25 per cent target is critical to make sure that we can continue to supply essential goods and services for our frontline staff in Queensland.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, to confirm, you are letting this committee know that Queensland Health is subject to the Queensland government's 25 per cent target; is that correct? You nodded?

**CHAIR:** To be specific, on the 25 per cent target?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Does it apply to Queensland Health?

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<sup>1</sup> This figure was changed to 1,100 following a clarification of evidence from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water dated 6 August 2021.



**Mr BUTCHER:** The 25 per cent target is in the PPE directions statement and applies across all of government, including Health.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It does apply to Health. Minister, can you please outline for us what percentage of PPE equipment Queensland Health buys from Queensland manufacturers?

**Mr SMITH:** Chair, I raise a point of order on relevance to the portfolio. Would this be a better question to put to the health minister?

**CHAIR:** I tend to agree. I understand where the member is going, but certainly that question may well be better directed to the Minister for Health although I think the minister is keen to provide some answer for that. I advise the member that maybe that is the better direction in future.

**Mr BUTCHER:** At this point I will hand over to my acting director-general, who sits on a committee that looks at this procurement process.

**Mr Glover:** The Queensland government is committed to establishing the target to procure 25 per cent—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I raise a point of order, Mr Chair.

**CHAIR:** Member, the acting director-general had just started.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The question was directed to the minister and the minister has answered my question. The answer was yes. I am happy to move on.

**CHAIR:** We are still getting the answer fully explained by the DG.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It was a 'yes' or 'no' question and it was answered.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, you may be satisfied but the rest of the committee, to fully examine this, still need some more information.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** With the greatest respect, the members of the opposition are given less than half an hour to ask questions on one of the most important issues in Queensland, which is manufacturing and regional development. I would like to move on.

**CHAIR:** Member, I point out that in the last session you guys had 41 minutes to ask questions—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I have never argued against that.

**CHAIR:** We are endeavouring to be fair on that. Can we let the acting director-general furnish the answer and then we will go on.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** My point, Mr Chair, is that it does not add anything.

**CHAIR:** I have ruled on the point of order. I understand what you are saying. We would already have been there if you had let it go.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** It is filibustering.

**Mr Glover:** On essential goods from Queensland's small to medium businesses within 12 months, initial figures of expenditure to the end of March 2021 indicate that a total of 29.4 per cent was spent on PPE from Queensland manufacturers. During 2020, a significant focus of the portfolio was on manufacturing supply chain responsive projects that addressed initial potential gaps in the supply chain for essential products. 466 responses were received from industry, including 376—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** With the greatest respect, this has nothing to do—

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, I have warned you about your interjections.

**Mr McDONALD:** Chair, I raise a point of order. This is interesting but, with a great deal of respect to the acting director-general, this is not answering the question.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The question has been answered.

**CHAIR:** I believe it is but I certainly request the acting director-general to come to the end of the answer.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** We did not ask the question.

**CHAIR:** Hang on; one at a time. Acting director-general, would you like to finish your response?

**Mr Glover:** 466 responses were received from the industry, including 376 requests for assistance and 90 from other suppliers. All 376 of those requesting assistance were able to be matched with suppliers or inquiries were resolved within the requesting businesses.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Thank you very much, Acting Director-General. We appreciate that. Minister, in relation to staffing in your department, I note that 'Manufacturing' and 'Regional Development' are in your title and that you have said it is important to grow the economy. I note from your SDS at page 2 that about 93 per cent of your department's staffing is for the Water portfolio and only seven per cent are allocated to the grow the economy service area. There are only 39 actual jobs in that part of your department. Minister, how is that growing the economy?

**Mr BUTCHER:** All staff of the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water are focused on supporting regional development and creating jobs for regional communities and in manufacturing. I have set the department four key objectives: to improve long-term water security; to drive the water infrastructure agenda and focus on aligning policy priorities with the community benefit; to play a critical and central role in regional economic planning with a focus on government priorities; and to build jobs in an efficient advanced manufacturing sector. In my department I expect each and every staff member to have a relentless focus on regional economic development, whether through building the science base for water planning or administering manufacturing grants.

The full-time-equivalent head count, broken between the grow the economy and water resource management services functions of the department, is reported on page 2 of the department's Service Delivery Statements, as you well know. The work base is calculated on the number of employees and not on the full-time-equivalent basis. Due to part-time arrangements, the head count will be greater than the full-time-equivalent numbers. We have 368 regional staff and Brisbane located staff number 253, which gives a total number of employees of 621. Almost 60 per cent of the department's staff are based outside of Brisbane. The Brisbane based employees include staff directly servicing the regions, including dam safety, compliance, project delivery, water and grants assessments through the manufacturing hubs. The Brisbane based staff support the efficient management of water resources, including making water available for economic development. They also provide support and expertise across both the manufacturing and water projects being facilitated by the regional staff.

Included within the Brisbane location are staff that perform the same duties as regionally based staff; for example, hydrographic, ecoscience and frontline customer focused staff through the water and manufacturing services centre that also supports the south-east corner here in Queensland. Basically, the service that we provide is largely in water. Water, as the member well knows, being a regional member, helps grow the economy here in Queensland.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, can you please explain your involvement and your department's involvement in the manufacturing of trains in Maryborough?

**CHAIR:** Minister, I think we had this question last year, too.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am happy to go on.

**Mr BUTCHER:** It is alright. I have a fantastic answer here. Queensland, as the member knows, has been building trains in Queensland since 1873. Since then, the rail manufacturing sector has expanded to be an absolutely essential part of our state's manufacturing industry. Over the past couple of years the sector has directly employed 3,700 people. Regional communities in particular benefit from the important contributions made by the Queensland rail and manufacturing sector. While these figures are impressive, the Palaszczuk Labor government is committed to further strengthening and transforming the rail manufacturing sector here in Queensland. We have affirmed this commitment by backing our rail manufacturers with a \$1 billion investment pipeline, including \$600 million—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Point of order, Mr Chair: it looks like the minister picked up the bit of paper from last estimates. At last estimates, it was quite clear that the Deputy Premier told this committee that this minister has no responsibility for the manufacture of the trains and he asked me to direct my questions elsewhere. I am asking the minister: what is your direct involvement in the manufacture of trains in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** I understand the question—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** The minister is reading out the Premier's statement. It has nothing to do with him.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, do not talk over the top of me. The minister is answering the question and I am sure that that will become clear the further he progresses.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Embarrassing, isn't it?

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, I cautioned you before about interjections and I said my next step would be to warn you under the standing orders. I will do that now. You have had enough warnings. You are warned under the standing orders for the constant interjections.

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I said, \$600 million to build 20 brand new passenger trains here in Queensland supporting service delivery following the opening of Cross River Rail. Those new Queensland trains are being built in Maryborough. We need these 20 trains for Cross River Rail. It is a \$5.4 billion job-generating project with an option of 45 more trains which we have guaranteed to be built in Maryborough by our manufacturing sector. We are also expanding the benefits of this industry right throughout regional Queensland. That is why we are going to revitalise the Rockhampton workshops as a rail—

**Mr McDONALD:** Point of order, Chair, on relevance. You gave the minister some instructions to come back to the question that was asked and he—

**CHAIR:** I understand the minister was just talking about other regional manufacturing opportunities that have opened up, so we are getting onto that part. The minister has heard my request about making that relevant.

**Mr McDONALD:** In regards to his involvement with train manufacture.

**CHAIR:** I am sure he understands that.

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I said in my opening statement, we are continuing to support manufacturers in Queensland through the setting up of manufacturing hubs right across regional Queensland. The opportunities coming forward in the supply chain for the manufacture of these trains are going to be huge. We will give support to local manufacturers through our manufacturing hubs, particularly setting up the manufacturing hub in Rockhampton, ensuring them a chance to get into that supply chain.

We have, as I said, just opened up a manufacturing hub on the Gold Coast. As the member for Burleigh would know, supply chain opportunities for local manufacturers on the Gold Coast have set us up well. Part of the investment for trains to be manufactured in Maryborough includes getting essential parts for those trains manufactured right across Queensland, including regional Queensland. This provides opportunities as well, as we know, in Townsville, Cairns and other areas of Queensland. We are supporting our manufacturers, through the manufacturing hubs and in the associated grants program, to help them with funding for machinery, and it will provide opportunities to fill in the gaps to make sure we can supply goods for our trains that we are making here in Queensland.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, why is it that the Office of Rural and Regional Queensland is a function of the department of Premier and Minister for Trade? As the Minister for Regional Development, are you provided with any information about what this office does or whether there are any reportable outcomes from their work? It certainly seems very disjointed, a bit like the manufacturing.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, that is outside the—

**Mr BUTCHER:** Are you calling manufacturers disjointed?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Under Labor, absolutely. The Minister for Manufacturing does not even look after—

**CHAIR:** You know the standing orders regarding calling out in the chamber. Minister, is that an office outside your portfolio area?

**Mr BUTCHER:** It is, and it just goes to show how passionate the Premier is about regional Queensland.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** A point of clarification: once again, the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing is not in control of the Office of Rural and Regional Queensland here in Queensland. I am just seeking clarification, for the committee and Queenslanders, particularly regional Queenslanders, to know what it is that this guy does under that title.

**CHAIR:** Member, I rule that question out of order. It has been answered. The minister looked disappointed on that one.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Mr Chair, it looks like the minister was disappointed. I think the minister should be given a right to answer the question if he so wishes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you for your opinion on that, but we have covered that. Move on to your next question, please.

**Mr McDONALD:** With respect, I raise a point of order with regard to that ruling. The member clearly said 'a point of clarification' on the question.

**CHAIR:** I know what the member said, but that is not the content of the question.

**Mr McDONALD:** The minister is about to answer the question.

**CHAIR:** I am ruling on that. The content of that question was aimed at something that is outside the minister's portfolio area and could not be covered by an examination of the expenditure in his area. Do you have another question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I do have another question. It is important to note, Mr Chair—

**CHAIR:** No, it is not important to note. Can you just ask your question?

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I am agreeing with you. I was about to agree with you, Mr Chair, in relation to—

**CHAIR:** No comments. Member, I am giving you a direction here. Ask your question. No preambles.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Does the minister agree with the chair's assertion that the minister is not responsible for rural and regional affairs in Queensland?

**CHAIR:** I will rule that one out of order.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I will move on. Minister, whilst Queensland regions are in the midst of a law-and-order crisis and a housing crisis, what actions are you taking in your role and capacity as Minister for Regional Development within this budget to address those serious issues?

**CHAIR:** Minister, if you could treat that with a broad brush. I could repeat what I said earlier, but I will give you the opportunity to answer that as you see fit.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Part of my role as Minister for Regional Development involves me getting out into regional Queensland. I am a huge believer of go, look, see. As the member notes—and I am pretty sure she made comments in the chamber at some stage—I have dust on my boots because she knows I am well travelled, particularly in regional and Western Queensland. Part of my role wherever I go is to partake in talks with the local regional communities, mayors and councillors as to what affects them in their communities. As the member has just highlighted, there are different issues in the different communities right throughout Queensland. The issues we see in Far North Queensland, in the Indigenous communities, are different to those that we see in western regional Queensland, in places like Southern Downs and Toowoomba.

Part of my role is to make sure that when I go and look, listen and see I come back to the cabinet table and the relevant ministers and make sure I get the points across in relation to what I have heard in regional Queensland and that I get those involved support, whether it be through meetings with the minister relevant to the problem or opportunities to make sure we develop policies in Queensland that are relevant to an area and support regional Queenslanders. As I said before, it is certainly important to talk to people. You cannot do that from Brisbane. When I first became Minister for Regional Development the Premier said to me, 'I don't want to see you in Brisbane and I don't want to see you in a suit.' That suited me fine. Here I am in a suit and in Brisbane, but that is what I have to do for estimates because estimates will not come to regional Queensland. I have certainly been out and about whenever I can supporting councils and regional communities to, through the Queensland government, get the best outcomes and address the needs in each area.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, you have just clarified for the committee that you can do a lot of travelling but you do not have any ministerial responsibility to do anything about what you hear whilst you are travelling?

**CHAIR:** I think the minister has answered that question. Once again, please ignore the argument inherent in that question and—

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** With respect, Mr Chair, I am just trying to help the minister out.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I do not need your help, member.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** I think you might.

**CHAIR:** Member for Nanango, I could have pulled that question because it is in breach of standing order 112, but I am allowing it to go through and allowing the minister to answer it how he wishes. Member for Bundaberg, did you have a point of order?

**Mr SMITH:** I was just wondering whether the member was making a point of order or interjecting under a warning again.

**CHAIR:** It was very close. I understand.

**Mr BUTCHER:** My role is to report to cabinet and to ministers on issues relevant to their portfolios, which I certainly have been doing since being appointed to this role in November last year. The opportunities that we see for regional development play a huge part in my portfolio responsibilities of manufacturing and water. Making sure there are opportunities in communities in regional Queensland certainly plays a pivotal role in the planning that we need to do as a state.

As the Minister for Regional Development, I am responsible for overseeing the delivery of project facilitation services to regionally significant priorities and manufacturing and water associated projects. In 2020-21 we have delivered tailored facilitation services to eight projects, with potential capital expenditure of \$840 million and leading to 648 construction and 532 operational jobs. An example of the great work we have been doing includes a \$69.36 million investment to enable McLean Farms in the Darling Downs to diversify into cage free egg production. This project has been supported through the projects of regional significance program with 150 megalitres of water secured to enable the development and construction commenced in October 2020 and over 200 construction jobs have already been engaged in that project. A further 131 new ongoing jobs will likely be generated within the business and the associated project pipeline.

It is projects like these that prove the value of regional development offices in the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. As Minister for Regional Development, I point out that we have the Building our Regions program. In this year's budget I have secured \$70 million over three years to allow councils to improve their water supply and sewerage systems. This program has been strongly supported by regional mayors and the Local Government Association of Queensland. A LGAQ press release states—

Mayor Jamieson, however, thanked the Queensland government for listening to the LGAQ and its member councils by dedicating \$70 million for the Building our Regions program to fund critical water infrastructure. 'Queensland's rural towns are fast approaching a water infrastructure cliff, with a pipe bursting every 80 minutes,' he said. This vital funding will help councils to address these issues. Mayor Jamieson said, 'The LGAQ and its member councils will continue to work with the Palaszczuk government to find ways to further fund critical water infrastructure upgrades and replacements going forward.'

**CHAIR:** We will now go to the member for Bundaberg for a question.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you outline how the Building our Regions program has supported jobs and growth in regional Queensland?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The Palaszczuk government is certainly committed to supporting economic and employment growth in regional Queensland. One way we are supporting jobs across regional areas of the state is through the Building our Regions program, which I just talked about. Since it was launched in 2015, the Building our Regions program has supported regional councils to provide improved local infrastructure across Queensland, while supporting thousands of well-paid regional jobs.

It has a long and impressive history of delivering infrastructure projects, economic opportunities and jobs for our regional communities in Queensland. Previous rounds of Building our Regions have seen more than \$348 million approved towards 271 projects across 67 local government areas. These projects have leveraged an additional \$539 million in funding from other sources for total capital expenditure of over \$887 million, supporting more than 2,700<sup>2</sup> construction jobs.

The 2021-22 budget committed additional funding of \$70 million over three years for the delivery of Building our Regions round 6 to support local government infrastructure projects in regional Queensland, with a focus on water and sewerage infrastructure projects. The funding will build on a history of successful water improvements Building our Regions has already funded across the state since 2015, including: the re-use of treated effluent water from the township of St George for the irrigation of lucerne crops; addressing deficiencies in drinking water for Boulia and Urandangi, including the replacement of the Boulia reservoir roof to ensure safety of the water supply from potential contaminants; funding towards stage 1A of Rubyanna wastewater treatment plant in the Bundaberg shire which will ultimately replace two existing flood prone wastewater treatment plants when complete; upgrading of the Forsayth water treatment plant to meet water quality criteria and the population growth needs for the township of Forsayth in Etheridge shire; and the Mareeba wastewater treatment plant upgrade.

I had the pleasure, as I said earlier tonight, of meeting the mayor recently. I know that she and her council are extremely grateful for the support through this infrastructure program. She is certainly one of the huge advocates for Building our Regions and this current funding round. Building our Regions

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<sup>2</sup> This figure was changed to 2,700 following a clarification of evidence received from the Department of Regional Development, Manufacturing and Water dated 5 August 2021.

will deliver critical job-creating projects in regional communities that improve water supply and security, improve livability and economic conditions and deliver on the government's commitments to supporting water security at every level of the water supply system.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, just following on from what you have just said about Building our Regions, can you outline how Building our Regions round 6 will support local councils to improve their water supply and sewerage systems?

**Mr BUTCHER:** Certainly since becoming the Minister for Regional Development and Manufacturing and Minister for Water, it has been my pleasure to travel across the state to talk to mayors and councillors about the challenges and opportunities within the portfolio. One issue that is consistently raised is the need for assistance from government with their water supply and sewerage systems.

That is why the recent budget has an allocation of \$70 million for round 6 of the hugely successful Building our Regions program. Once open, those regional councils will be able to bid for a share of this funding to improve their water and sewerage systems. The guidelines for the program will be released in early August with a call for expressions of interest opening two weeks after that. This funding complements the Queensland government's longstanding commitment to regional water supplies.

The program will deliver critical job-creating projects in regional communities that will improve water supply and sewerage services and improve livability and economic conditions. In designing this round, we have listened to regional councils about their need for that assistance with funding of their water supply and sewerage systems. We will assist our regional towns and cities to provide access to a reliable source of supply, provide adequate treatment and reservoir storage capacity, improve or maintain drinking quality standards, minimise system losses and provide efficient water supply system management and control measures. We will also assist our regional towns and cities to provide sustainable sewerage services to address the capacity and treatment challenges necessary to meet community expectations and environmental standards.

With this funding we are showing our commitment to supporting town water supply and sewerage services at every level of the system. Round 6 continues the work that the department has already undertaken with regional councils to improve water and drinking water outcomes. To date the department has worked alongside regional councils to publish 24 water supply security assessments for communities right across the state.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, with reference to page 2 of the SDS, can you please advise why it is so critical that the government continues to support the manufacturing industry across Queensland?

**Mr BUTCHER:** The Queensland manufacturing industry is an important part of the Palaszczuk government's COVID-19 economic recovery plan. We are working with our manufacturers every day on their shop floors and in their supply chains to innovate, create a skilled workplace and adopt world-best practices.

We have long recognised the vital role that the manufacturing industry plays here in Queensland as part of the Queensland economy. That is why we developed the Queensland advanced manufacturing 10-year road map. That road map provides a plan for initiatives to assist manufacturers to transition to advanced manufacturing to enhance productivity and competitiveness, generate jobs and grow the economy.

Our support is working. ABS data shows that over the past decade the manufacturing industry consistently has contributed more than \$20 billion per annum to the Queensland economy. Figures show that, despite the early onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-20, the industry contributed \$21.5 billion to the state's economy, making it the fifth largest contributing industry.

In terms of employment, based on four-quarter average ABS data, manufacturing jobs in Queensland have not just been maintained but grown. For the four-quarter average to June 2021, the Queensland manufacturing industry employed 177,700 people, representing 6.9 per cent of the state's workforce. Compared to the previous year, manufacturing employment increased by 13,300 people, up from 164,400 in the June quarter. As we see more and more manufacturers with onshore production, these employment figures are likely to grow into the future.

Importantly, women comprise over a quarter of the manufacturing workforce. In the June quarter 2021, manufacturing employed 48,900 women, or 27.5 per cent of total manufacturing employment. We know this is important for the future of the industry in Queensland because diversity is the key to innovation. The Palaszczuk government certainly will continue to encourage more women to consider careers in the manufacturing industry here in Queensland. Similarly, manufacturing is an important

employer in the regions. In the June quarter 2021, manufacturers in the regions outside South-East Queensland employed 46,900 Queenslanders, representing 26.4 per cent of manufacturing workers statewide. Importantly, a high proportion of manufacturing jobs are full-time positions, providing good, long-term employment opportunities for all Queenslanders. In the June quarter 2021, 84.8 per cent of manufacturing jobs were full-time.

The initiatives outlined in the road map are assisting manufacturers now to face recent challenges and disruptions while moving forward to remain resilient and to grow. Some of the key road map initiatives are the \$61.5 million Made in Queensland grant program, which is supporting small and medium sized manufacturers to increase international competitiveness, productivity and innovation by the adoption of new technologies and to generate high-skill jobs for the future. Since 2017, Made in Queensland has supported 84 advanced manufacturing projects across the state which is expected to create more than 1,100 jobs over the five years and generate more than \$100 million in private sector investment. To date, 72 Made in Queensland projects have been completed, creating over 500 new jobs and leveraging over \$70 million in private sector investment.

The Skills Implementation Plan for Advanced Manufacturing provides a mechanism for the Queensland government to collaborate with industry to attract, develop and retain world-class skills that will facilitate the adoption of Industry 4.0 and the implementation of leading-edge technologies. Our \$38.5 million investment in regional manufacturing hubs is facilitating skills development and connecting regional supply chains with tier 1 opportunities in defence, food, mining and the rail sector.

The \$13.5 million Manufacturing Hubs Grant Program is supporting our regional manufacturers to adopt leading-edge technologies, leading to an increase in markets, access and competitiveness both domestically and internationally. The industry engagement program provides tools, information and demonstrations that assist manufacturers in their uptake of Industry 4.0 processes and technologies. In 2020-21, 23 workshop events and seminars were delivered, attracting over 730 attendees. Through initiatives like these, our government remains steadfast in working with industry to support our manufacturers in securing jobs of today and growing to create the jobs of the future.

**CHAIR:** My question is one I foreshadowed during the introduction—the nub of why we are here tonight. The Craft Brewing Strategy is referred to on page 2 of the SDS. Can you update the committee on how the government is supporting the craft brewing industry in delivering all of its objectives? That includes skills and training development in this industry.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I thank the member for his question. I know that he is a passionate advocate for the craft brewing industry here in Queensland. I also know that the craft brewing industry means more jobs in his local area, as it does for members right across the state.

Queensland's craft brewers and our artisan distillers are innovative, dynamic and proudly producing some of the best products in the world. As a strongly emerging part of the economy, they already offer a significant contribution to the state and our regional communities. Craft brewing contributes an estimated \$62 million each year to our economy. By 2024, it is anticipated that this will be well over \$100 million. Queensland is now proudly home to more than 100 craft brewers and 34 artisan distillers, employing more than 1,800 people.

Importantly, as we continue our economic recovery from COVID-19, almost 25 per cent of craft breweries and 38 per cent of artisan distillers are located in regional Queensland. In 2018, the Queensland government achieved an Australian first when it launched the Queensland Craft Brewing Strategy. The strategy supports the independent craft brewing industry to develop its capability and capacity, access new markets, generate those new jobs and increase its economic contribution.

I am pleased to report that the strategy has delivered on all of its actions and continues to deliver on all of its objectives. Since it was released, we have established Australia's first BrewLab at Coopers Plains and provided funding of \$1.1 million over five years to enable craft brewers to develop and test beer recipes without interrupting their own production lines. I have had the opportunity to visit the BrewLab. It is a great facility. There are a lot of young minds there who are looking for an opportunity to get the skills they need to move into the industry. To date, there have been 40 inquiries from industry which has resulted in 23 projects utilising various BrewLab services.

We have also demonstrated our commitment to investing in skills and development and training for the growing craft beer industry by introducing a Certificate III in Food Processing for craft brewing. TAFE Queensland is delivering the program using the BrewLab equipment for practical training. Sixteen graduates of the Certificate III in Food Processing for craft brewing—and I had the pleasure of meeting some of them—are now employed across Queensland in breweries. Another 24 are currently enrolled in the course and there is a waitlist of 67 people for future courses.

We have also been working to grow Queensland's artisan distilling industry to ensure that this growing sector has the opportunity to grow and to create jobs. The new artisan liquor licence, which commenced in May, allows smaller enterprises and new entrants to increase market access by reducing the regulatory burden on those new businesses. Since coming into effect, the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation has received 114 applications for new licences, with many of the applications having already been approved and in operation. It is important to note that 27 of those applications are from regional producers, including Wards Brewing in my own electorate of Gladstone.

Other actions delivered include supporting Queensland brewers to exhibit at their Hofex trade show in Hong Kong as part of Trade and Investment Queensland's 'Taste of Queensland' display. This helped to enable Brisbane's Newstead Brewing Co. to begin exporting to Hong Kong in 2021 after being part of that display.

The department has been working to promote local brewers within government, and it is pleasing to note that 27 Queensland brewers are now listed on the Queensland Government Food and Beverage Supplier Directory. The department has also worked collaboratively with the Logan City Council to bring about Logan's brewer-friendly planning scheme and will continue to promote similar schemes right across Queensland.

We are not stopping there. In reaffirming our commitment to support the growth of that industry, which includes artisan distillers, we established the Artisan Liquor Advisory Group to support ongoing discussions between industry and government. The group includes members of the Independent Brewers Association, the Australian Distillers Association, Queensland Hotels Association and Clubs Queensland. We held our inaugural meeting on 10 May, and I look forward to attending the second meeting next month.

It is a simple formula. When we manufacture locally we create more long-term, secure jobs for Queenslanders. For our craft brewing and artisan distilling industries that means jobs in construction, it means jobs in operation, it means jobs in distribution and export, and it means jobs right throughout the manufacturing supply chain. I look forward to providing even more assistance to this emerging industry to create more products and more jobs for Queenslanders.

**Mr MADDEN:** Minister, I refer to page 5 of the SDS. Can you update the committee on the progress of the additional round, round 4, of the Made in Queensland funding program, including how many applications were received and how it is supporting regional manufacturers?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As the member knows, the global COVID-19 pandemic has exposed all economies to supply chain disruptions for essential goods and products not just for health and medical supplies but many other items and inputs essential to industry and the economy. Now more than ever it is important to set the right conditions and provide the appropriate support for manufacturers to explore new opportunities and new technologies to manufacture what our state needs right here. The Palaszczuk government is driving our COVID-19 economic recovery plan through programs just like Made in Queensland. The Made in Queensland program has been hugely successful in supporting manufacturers right around Queensland to adopt new technologies to grow their businesses and create new local jobs. That is why the Palaszczuk government committed a further \$15.5 million for a fourth round of the program, with applications closing last month. Round 4 continues supporting Queensland manufacturers to adopt advanced manufacturing through the implementation of Industry 4.0 new technologies, processes and practices. In addition, round 4 focused on projects that involve the onshoring of manufacturing activity in Queensland and gave extra support to those in our regions.

The department received an unprecedented 174 applications from manufacturers seeking to transform their businesses to Industry 4.0, improve productivity and international competitiveness and reshore manufacturing to Queensland, which I know the member has an interest in. Of the 174 applications received, 49 were from regional manufacturers, making up 28 per cent of the total. By supporting manufacturers to adopt leading-edge technologies and automation that ensures quality, competitiveness and sustainability, the Made in Queensland program seeks to increase the manufacture of essential goods and produce throughout the entire supply chain. Put simply, we want to ensure that manufacturing stays, expands and has a future here in Queensland. Implementing industry-leading technology, processes and practices that see our manufacturers competing globally while producing what we need at home is one of the most effective ways of doing that. Applicants that scored highly on the initial application against the evaluation criteria will be invited to submit a detailed application. The top ranked applicants from the detailed application process will receive the offer of a grant later this year.



Grants awarded through this round of Made in Queensland will help reduce our reliance on items imported from other states or overseas. This will lessen the business impact of any future supply chain disruptions and keep Queensland businesses running. Since it began in 2017 the Made in Queensland program has helped manufacturers right across the state with the first three rounds supporting 84 advanced manufacturing projects. Of these, 72 are now complete and have already supported more than 500 new jobs. Even better, this figure is set to increase further as businesses maximise the benefits of productivity, quality improvements, onshoring and waste reduction. In addition to supporting 500 jobs these projects have protected many more, with over 3,900 jobs retained through the successful completion of Made in Queensland projects.

When we consider our plan for Queensland's economic recovery, our regions have never been more important to us. Regional manufacturers have been awarded 34 of the 84 grants, with 30 of these projects completed to date creating more than 230 jobs, retaining more than 1,700 jobs in regional Queensland. I look forward to providing further updates on existing projects and making announcements regarding new recipients over the coming months.

**Dr MacMAHON:** My question is for the acting director-general. There was a recent report from CSIRO and QUT that identified green steel manufacturing as a key opportunity to replace declining coal export revenue. What consideration has the government given to establishing a green steel plant in Queensland to make use of our skilled workforce and abundant clean energy?

**Mr Glover:** Thank you for the question. Can I ask you to please clarify what you mean by 'green' steel?

**Dr MacMAHON:** Steel that is made using renewable energy sources.

**Mr Glover:** I am sorry, I did not hear that?

**Dr MacMAHON:** Steel made using renewable energy sources.

**Mr Glover:** Currently the Queensland government is investigating a number of activities, and through my department we are also investigating activities on different types of manufacturing through Queensland.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Would that include green steel, as I have just mentioned?

**Mr Glover:** No subjects are off the table for consideration at this stage.

**Dr MacMAHON:** Is there an opportunity to feed back into making suggestions as to what to review further?

**Mr Glover:** There are actually no considerations off the table at the moment, as I have said.

**CHAIR:** Congratulations, member for Nanango, you get the last question of the night.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** Minister, I think I should ask a question on Building our Regions. You spent a great deal of time talking about how wonderful it was. A pipe is bursting every 80 minutes. It has been strongly supported. You talked about how you have listened to everyone at every level of the system. There were 24 water assessments happening. There is so much need for this Building our Regions program.

If that is the case, Minister, why have you only allocated \$10 million in this year's budget towards it, given that just in the South Burnett alone the required dam upgrades mandated by your government are roughly \$12 million? That is just in the South Burnett. As I am not the minister, I cannot have it all for my electorate.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I am sure you would like to.

**Mrs FRECKLINGTON:** There is a question in there. The question is: given your praise and other people's praise, which I take on board, why did the minister only allocate \$10 million this year, and in fact why would the minister only allocate \$70 million over the forwards?

**Mr BUTCHER:** As I have discussed at great length, Building Our Regions is something that regional councils in particular spoke to me about loud and clear to make sure they got that funding to come forward. We have secured \$70 million over three years. The first year is \$10 million, then \$30 million and \$30 million in the second and third years. The reason we have done that is to make sure those councils across the state have every opportunity to get those projects collectively together and ready. If they are not ready, there is an opportunity moving forward to get the last two rounds in the last two years to get those detailed business cases and feasibility studies to make sure they can be part of the grants program under Building our Regions.

As I said, we have dedicated the three rounds, the three years worth, to support regional councils with their water and wastewater treatment facilities, which we know are critical to them. I have heard loud and clear from just about every one of the regional councils I talked to that the biggest issue they have in regional Queensland is their water infrastructure and the need for those funding applications to come through. Those councils that are up and ready to go will get the first opportunity to move forward with the projects they are looking for. The next phases in the second and third years, which our funding supports with \$30 million each, will help those that are not ready for the first round that will come this year.

**CHAIR:** I think we have time for one quick question from the member for Bundaberg.

**Mr SMITH:** Minister, can you please provide further details on the expansion of the regional manufacturing hubs announced for Mackay and the Gold Coast?

**CHAIR:** We only have a few minutes left.

**Mr BUTCHER:** As the member knows, I am very passionate about regional Queensland, particularly the huge opportunity to support and further expand our highly skilled manufacturing sector in the regions. We have committed \$30 million to make sure that we support the growth of regional manufacturers, and we established three regional manufacturing hubs to get it started. These hubs are in Townsville, Cairns and Rockhampton to service manufacturers across those regions. In 2020 we announced a fourth hub, which was established in Gladstone, to better service the emerging industries in the region, particularly the coming hydrogen industry in Queensland.

Due to the outstanding success of the regional hubs, the Palaszczuk government committed \$8.5 million to expand the hub program to include Mackay and the Gold Coast. This additional \$8.5 million commitment over three years will see our government provide important targeted support to these regional manufacturers. The hubs will provide expert advice and the delivery of skills and training programs to help them grow and expand into new markets while creating opportunities for the businesses to thrive.

**Mr HART:** Point of order, Chair: I am pretty sure the minister has already read this answer once tonight. Is this the same one again?

**CHAIR:** No.

**Mr HART:** I have heard all of this information.

**Mr BUTCHER:** I understand that you have not had much of an opportunity to talk tonight.

**Mr HART:** I have had a big opportunity to listen and I am sure I have heard it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, member for Burleigh. We are listening to the answer here, so the minister will continue.

**Mr BUTCHER:** We have made it quite clear along the way that the opportunity to expand the manufacturing hubs is increasing. We will continue to look at other opportunities for manufacturing hubs right around Queensland. There are opportunities that we see in the six hubs we will have here in Queensland. I have always said that I do not want the people in those hubs to be sitting in an office in that area. Their job is to make sure they get out and about and talk to other manufacturers, not only in the area the hub is in but in those other regional areas that they can service.

We know for a fact that the Rockhampton and Gladstone hubs have serviced the Bundaberg region. They have been out to Emerald. They have certainly done other work for regional communities, particularly those manufacturers that are looking at support and grants from the manufacturing hubs. I am proud of the hubs that continue to deliver for manufacturers here in Queensland. They are giving opportunities to those regional communities into the future, just as much as the big cities they currently support.

It was great to be down on the Gold Coast recently to open the hub there. It is certainly a great opportunity for those manufacturing sectors. It is huge. I know that the local member there is supportive of the hub coming forward. The next one we will move into is the Mackay region. We know the mining and METS sector is critically important to the state of Queensland. This will help the manufacturing sector and particularly that reverse manufacturing, where the mines are struggling to get equipment and parts for trucks and vehicles from overseas. We will continue to support those areas in regional Queensland by doing that and investing in our manufacturing hubs.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We are just about to finish. Can you give a quick wrap-up? Then we will talk about any questions on notice.

**Mr BUTCHER:** Thank you for the opportunity. I would like to thank the committee for their time today as well as the visiting members, such as the member for Nanango and those from the crossbenches. Thank you to the parliamentary staff for making this happen. It is not an easy job. You have certainly kept us COVID-safe with the cleaning and setting up of the facilities. I really appreciate that. The estimates is an important process. I am glad to be here tonight, having been in hospital last year, as the member for Nanango pointed out. I was also one of the passengers on the flight with that hostess, so I was glad I could get out of quarantine with a false report.

I know that this is very taxing on my staff, who have worked very hard during this process. Being involved with this for the first time, I have seen the amount of work that goes into this. I appreciate that the committee has put in the same amount of work. I thank all of my staff for doing that. Lastly, I give a special thanks to my acting director-general, Michael Glover, who has joined us recently. He has done an outstanding job leading the department and supporting me during this time. A big thank you to everyone.

**CHAIR:** We do not have any questions on notice. Thank you, Minister. I also want to thank all of the parliamentary staff who have contributed today. Thank you, Steph, for the stewardship of this committee. Thank you to Hansard and all of our support staff. I really do appreciate that. Thank you to everyone who has come along and contributed. This concludes the 2021 hearing of estimates for the State Development and Regional Industries Committee. I declare this hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 7.45 pm.**