



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

**TRANSCRIPT**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

**Wednesday 3 June 2026**

## **MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Mike Gaffney MLC

Hon Casey Hiscutt MLC

Hon Meg Webb MLC

## **OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

### **HON. FELIX ELLIS MP**

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources, Minister for Skills and Jobs, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

### **Ministerial Office representatives**

#### **Adam Foster**

Chief of Staff

#### **Rachael Murray**

Senior Adviser, Police, Fire and Emergency Management

#### **Edith Bevin**

Senior Adviser, Police, Fire and Emergency Management

#### **Mitchell Haigh**

Senior Adviser, Business, Industry and Resources

#### **Anne Fidock**

Senior Adviser, Business, Industry and Resources

#### **Jack Milbourne**

Senior Adviser, Skills and Jobs

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### **Police Fire and Emergency Management Portfolio**

#### **Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

#### **Donna Adams**

Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM/State Controller

#### **Jonathan Higgins**

Deputy Commissioner of Police

#### **Adrian Bodnar**

Assistant Commissioner Operations

#### **Robert Blackwood**

Assistant Commissioner Specialist Support

#### **Doug Oosterloo**

Assistant Commissioner Capability

#### **Ross Hinkley**

A/Deputy Secretary

**Scott Wilson-Haffenden**

A/Executive Director, People & Business Services

**Mandy Denby (observer only)**

Director, Office of the Commissioner/Secretary

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**State Fire Commission**

**Jeremy Smith**

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner

**Simon Pilkington**

A/Deputy Chief Officer - Operations

**Andrea Heath**

Executive Director, Strategy and Capability

**Mick Lowe**

Executive Director, SES and Volunteers

**Steve Whitely**

Chair, State Fire Commission

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**Business, Industry and Resources Portfolio**

**Department of State Growth**

**Dennis Hendriks**

Acting Coordinator-General

**Michael Mogridge**

Deputy Secretary, Economic Development

**Vanessa Pinto**

Deputy Secretary, ReCFIT and Resources

(in the room)

**David Bennett**

Executive Director, Investment Attraction

**Andrew Crane**

Project Director, Office of the Coordinator-General

**Sarah Thomson**

Acting Executive Director, Business, Industry and Investment\

**Sarah Russell**

Director, Policy

**Alistair Morton**

Director, Mineral Resources Tasmania

**Tom Byrne**

Assistant Director, Forest Policy

**Travis Boutcher**

Director, Finance

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**Forest Practices Authority**

**Anne Chuter**

Chief Forest Practices Officer, Forest Practices Authority

**Private Forests Tasmania**

Elizabeth Pietrzykowski

Chief Executive Officer Private Forests Tasmania

**Mineral Resources Tasmania**

**Ben Waining**

Director Mining Policy

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**Skills and Jobs Portfolio**

**Department of State Growth**

**Alex Paterson**

General Manager, Skills and Workforce

**Peta Sugden**

Senior Director, Industry Insights and Workforce

(in the room)

**Stuart Hollingsworth**

Executive Director, Economy and Jobs Strategy

**Danielle Harris**

A/Deputy Secretary, Business Services

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**TasTAFE**

**Tim Gardner**

TasTAFE Board Chair

**Dr Norman Baker**

TasTAFE CEO

**William McShane**

Chief Financial Officer

**Colleen Sheehan**

Executive Director, Governance and Corporate Affairs

# PUBLIC

**The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.**

## **DIVISION 9**

### **Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management**

**CHAIR** (Ms Armitage) - Good morning, minister, and welcome to our third day of Estimates. Very pleased to see you here. If I could introduce my team at the table here: the honourable Luke Edmunds from Pembroke will be here shortly; the honourable Meg Webb, member for Nelson; myself, Rosemary Armitage, member for Launceston; the honourable Mike Gaffney, member for Mersey; and the honourable Casey Hiscutt, member for Montgomery. We have James and Julie, our secretaries, and we have Gaye on Hansard.

As you're well aware, Standing Orders provide that you may answer some questions on notice if you don't have the answer at the time. Very happy to provide them to you in writing, and be really pleased for a timely response. If you would like to introduce your team at the table, and then perhaps do a short overview before we commence questioning.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. At the table we've got Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police; Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police; Ross Hinkley, Acting Deputy Secretary; Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Acting Executive Director, People and Business Services; Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner, Operations; Robert Blackwood, Assistant Commissioner, Specialist Support; Doug Oosterloo, Assistant Commissioner, Capability; and my Chief of Staff, Adam Foster, who won't be taking questions.

I want to start by acknowledging the hard work, dedication, and sacrifice of our police, fire and State Emergency Service personnel.

With our nation and the world facing turbulent times, the Tasmanian government is investing \$1.37 billion into public safety to keep our community safe as part of the 2026-27 Budget. Since we came to government in 2014, we've taken police numbers from 1120 to a record high of 1459. That's 339 extra police officers on the ground, keeping Tasmanians safe.

As part of our government's response to the tragic Bondi terror attack, we're cracking down on criminals in possession of illegal firearms and implementing a nation-leading firearm buyback scheme, accelerating the National Firearms Register as a priority for our government, with Tasmania one of the leading jurisdictions on current milestones.

We've also rolled out hundreds of metal detection wands across the state to take more dangerous weapons off our street. As of last month, there have been more than 8000 wand searches conducted and 82 weapons seized as a result since Reid's Law was passed in November 25. The use of these wands has proved to be a safer and less intrusive method for both the community and our police officers.

Our police on the beat put their lives on the line every day they go to work, and our government is investing \$748,000 to roll out new body-worn cameras and protection vests to give our officers greater confidence to go about their day and to keep Tasmanians safe.

Up to 50 frontline officers will be trained in the use of tasers as part of a \$650,000 12-month trial, providing greater safety in high-risk situations and bringing Tasmania in line with all other Australian jurisdictions.

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Targeted crime-fighting taskforces such as Artemis and Raven help crack down on criminals and keep our community safe. This Budget delivers more than \$265.8 million to investigate crime and continue this important work.

We've opened the new Arch centre in the north-west, the first of its kind in the state, delivering wrap-around trauma-informed support services for victims of sexual violence in the north-west coast.

Our government is delivering modern rostering for police with Project Horizon underway. A proof of concept is expected in late 2026 with a focus on improving officer safety, fatigue management, roster compliance, and workforce reporting.

The safety of our communities, our considerable natural assets and our infrastructure is heavily reliant on the dedication of more than 5000 TFS and SES volunteers, and this is a budget that recognises their service. We're investing in new emergency services hubs at Wynyard, Rosebery and Kingston, as well as \$20.4 million to support operational readiness in the Tasmania Fire Service.

I now welcome your questions to provide more detail on how our government and police, fire and state emergency services and supporting staff are working to ensure the safety of the Tasmanian community.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. Would you like to start?

**Ms WEBB** - Is that all right?

**CHAIR** - Yes, of course.

**Ms WEBB** - With some overview questions.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, minister, and welcome to your team. We've got plenty of people to answer questions, which is good to see.

The first area I've been asking each department that appears before us this week is around use of external consultancies, and so in a sort of generic fashion, can you provide a breakdown of the total number of external consultancies that have been utilised during 2025-26, the current year, including any that are still underway, and the quantum of costs for each of those consultancies and who they're with?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass over to the team from DPFEM to provide the answer.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. We've got quite an extensive table.

**Ms WEBB** - Would it be easier to just table a table with us? That would be helpful.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, we can do that.

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**Ms WEBB** - Are you able to do that now, or perhaps later in the day if you need to make it into a format that -

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I appreciate that. In terms of consultancies that may be planned for this next financial year, 2026-27, are we anticipating that we're going to need to subject those to operational efficiencies under what's laid out in this Budget, and are there going to need to be any changes to any perhaps planned consultancies or ongoing consultancies because of operational efficiencies?

**Comm ADAMS** - Through you, minister. We've certainly identified consultancies as part of our budget efficiencies that we obviously need to achieve in the next financial year, and we've apportioned a percentage of how we want to reduce those consultancies, which will mean trying to do some of that work in house.

We have two major projects where we have used consultancies to provide support to us, but we'll look at rescoping those in the context of the Budget. It's what we will need to do as part of our non-salary efficiencies that we need to achieve.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. In terms of consultancies, my understanding is that with this department that there's regular use of external consultants to do internal reviews of matters. Because the commissioner's mentioned in public comments before certain things being the result of recommendations or information provided through internal reviews, I'm just interested in that aspect of consultancy use for the department.

I'd like a picture, particularly for that area, of how much the department spent on internal reviews, say, broken down over the past five years. Is that information that might be able to be provided?

**Comm ADAMS** - We'll look at it. We'll take it on notice. We'll have a look at it.

**Ms WEBB** - What I would be looking for there is specifically for that purpose of internal reviews, who the consultants were, and what the amount was that was allocated to that consultant. We can put these in writing to you at the end of the day if it's not something that you can provide during the day today.

The use of those external consultants for those sorts of internal reviews, is that an area that you're anticipating you might need to be applying operational efficiencies to going forward?

**Comm ADAMS** - We've applied the efficiency across the broad category of consultancy. If there was a particular matter or incident that I was of the view that we needed an independent oversight or examination of our actions, I don't think that the budget scenario would prevent me from doing that. This is around the focus on ensuring we've got public trust in the services that we deliver.

If we've seen a failure in the decision-making or our actions, I think it still is appropriate that we bring in somebody to critically analyse and examine the police practices on whatever the occasion might be. We just need to be smart about where we are engaging consultants. We

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have a number of ICT projects where we've used consultants to provide us advice, and we're going to need to reconsider how we actually engage consultants moving forward so we meet our budget efficiencies effectively.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. In terms of internal reviews, I don't just mean instances where maybe there's something that needs to be looked at by a set of external eyes, but my understanding is, because I think there's been public comments about some of the trials, like the taser trial that was reviewed or the roster trial that was reviewed, and presumably those are conducted by external groups, or were they within agency?

**Comm ADAMS** - The roster, we did engage an independent provider in relation to the rosters. The taser, obviously, we've got a pilot that we're about to start on 1 July. There's a lot of reporting and guidance that'll sit around that taser pilot. I would expect that we would look at that at the end of evaluating that pilot internally with maybe a peer review from another jurisdiction, but I wouldn't see us engaging someone as a specific consultant who would look at that particular -

**Ms WEBB** - Do you have preferred consultants who do those sorts of potential reviews of operational things within the agency, in that sense, or bring in?

**Comm ADAMS** - It would depend. The government has a list of contractors that we are encouraged to obviously look at in the first instance. There's a panel of contractors or consultancies. If it's an operational matter that we're not going to get the evaluation or the examination of the issue through that panel, we would look towards other jurisdictions who are leading the way in the use of that particular capability or - as an example, we engaged Queensland Police to look at our use of force model and to actually provide us a critical analysis of where we sat in terms of training, equipment.

I've previously stated before that a safe model of policing is a priority for every member of our corporate management group, so we are always looking to improve the way we provide guidance, equipment, instruction and training to our staff in terms of keeping them safe.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Can move on to another one or -

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I might just ask one question and we'll come back. We do have time. That's fine.

Minister, in 2019 or thereabouts, DPFEM, Tas Police purchased an off-the-shelf intelligence system called Atlas to replace the ageing information data management system. My understanding is Atlas was intended to be the centre of intelligence system to drive police operations, nothing there are other subsidiary and subordinate systems for certain activities, such as the firearms management.

It was understood that the Atlas system has been plagued with problems, especially relating to the user-friendly nature of it, and my understanding is that many police don't like using Atlas because it's not user-friendly. And there have been other integration problems as well. Are DPFEM satisfied with Atlas as its primary intelligence system? That's my first question, and the second one would be, what's the total cost of the entire system to date?

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**Comm ADAMS** - Again, through you, minister. To put it in context, there's two parts to the project, what we call Project Unify. We had the Atlas project that was commenced - I'll find the date, but that was the first tranche of the project. We again received another injection of money from government to progress and broaden the program of work, which was effectively what we call Project Atlas 2.0. There are a number of other projects that were within that scope of work, so it's not just one particular system.

We have our online crime reporting system as part of that project. We also have what we call a user interface, which we will refer to today as the Thin Client. That's another part of the project. PINS replacement is another part of the project; online reporting of sexual assaults is another part of the project. So, there are a number of sub-projects that sit under the banner of Project Unify.

To pick up on your commentary, Atlas 1.0, which is the first part of our project, actually delivered two things for our staff, and it was effectively around how we capture intelligence in a street check and an intelligence sub. It's fair to say that it hasn't received good feedback from our staff in terms of it being an intuitive system. It's quite clunky.

We've taken on feedback in relation to that from our staff. And when I talked about the user interface or a thing we call Project Thin Client, that is about developing a front cover, an interface over the intel system so that it's more intuitive and better for police officers to be able to input reports.

And I'm told, at the moment it might take between 20 and 30 minutes to prepare an intelligence sub, or submission. With the Thin Client sitting over the top of it, that can be reduced to three to five minutes. So, that is part of the project. We're certainly taking on board the feedback to make sure that the system is actually user-friendly and is going to be a benefit and a tool for our staff.

**CHAIR** - You could say that DPFEM are fully confident that the Atlas intelligence system will effectively service the needs of Tasmania Police and the community?

**Comm ADAMS** - It's doing that now. It's just not user-friendly for our staff. And, I guess, you put yourself in the shoes of -

**CHAIR** - If people don't use it, yes. Then it's not worth it.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. And you put yourself in the shoes of a constable, they want to be able to - they do online shopping pretty quickly, they'd expect to be able to input an intelligence submission. So that's the whole purpose of what we call Project Thin Client. That's about developing that user interface, absolutely.

But as you're aware, ICT projects have many curves and hurdles to get through. We've got some significant oversight over our project. We've faced some challenges similar to many of the other projects across government. But we've made some fairly, I guess -

**CHAIR** - You're looking to resolve them.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. Absolutely.

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**CHAIR** - Thank you. I wasn't sure whether you had a follow-up. No?

**Ms WEBB** - I had some more on that same topic, which was going to be capital expenditures that I can do here for continuity.

**CHAIR** - That's fine. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, the DPFEM annual report for 2024-25 states on page 25 that 'Project Unify (now known as Project Atlas) represents a significant investment in digital transformation in policing and continues to deliver its mission to modernise and unify Tasmania Police's operational information systems', which is what we've just heard about.

And it also says in the annual report that it remains on track to be operational mid-2026, which I think, then, is what you were updating us on just there, that there's an element of it that is operational now that's new, which I had in my mind as being called something like Project Link or -

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. That's our online crime reporting. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. And that's just a recently operational element?

**Comm ADAMS** - It is.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. That's for online reporting of minor crime, am I on the right track with that?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. In terms of the original scheduled go-live date for that Project Link was meant to be - my understanding is in 2024, so we're quite a long way out from when it was originally planned. How many times across that period has the go-live date for Project Link been extended since it was, I think, originally planned in 2022? From 2022 onwards, how many times did we push out the go-live date?

**Comm ADAMS** - Again, through you, minister. I can't give you a number as to how many times the go live was changed, but I can say that it was due to go live - I think it was around this time last year. I made the decision to pause that project.

The system was not going to be up to what the community would expect in terms of submitting a minor crime report, and until we were able to address the technical issues on that system and meet what the community would expect for a system such as that, we deliberately delayed that particular project so we got the technology right.

And as you have alluded to, the online crime reporting has gone live in the last two weeks. And if you want to know any details around the number of times it's been used, I can refer to the deputy.

**Ms WEBB** - No. That's okay. I'm still interested in the process of delivering the project. I've got a couple of questions on that to follow up. Would you be able to provide us with an

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answer to that question I had about how many times the go-live date for Project Link was extended since?

**Comm ADAMS** - We will look at Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo, who may be able to give that answer.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. I can. In November 2024 was the original go-live date. It missed that date. The next go-live date was - and the commissioner was right - April of 2025, and that's the date that the commissioner's referring to as being - dealt with the key date of delay. From that time we haven't had any other go-live date. We've worked very hard to get the system stable and working, and the next go-live date was 22 May, which is when it did go live.

**Ms WEBB** -When it happened.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. This year.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you for that. I appreciate the detail. And then in terms of the budget, the budget for that aspect of the project, I believe, was - it likely changed over time. Are you able to outline what the original budget was for that type of project and what it was delivered for?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. Happy for me, through you, minister? Yes. We've got the numbers here. I can look them up very quickly, but certainly off the top of my head around \$1.5 million was the original allocation, and -

**Ms WEBB** - For Project Link?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - For Project Link.

**Ms WEBB** -All right, \$1.5 million was the original.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. And it's come in, in the end, at around \$1.8 million. Now, I can get exact figures for you if you want that.

**Ms WEBB** - That would be useful. It can be provided later in the day.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - It is around that number.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Perhaps I can do that one right now instead of on notice. Mr Oosterloo was very close. The original allocation was \$1.75 million. Up till the end of April we'd spend \$1.6 million, and then there'll be some over the last month, as well, so we're on track to be within our budget for that.

**Ms WEBB** - You say you've delivered under budget based on the originally approved budget for Project Link?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - No. That's up till the end of April, so there'll be some spend over May when we went live, as well, which will go to around that.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay, but it'll be on budget according to what was originally approved.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Interesting.

The use of contractors there to deliver this project, my understanding was that KPMG were the main contractor to come in and deliver on the overall project for Unify phase 2 but not have had their contract cancelled, that that happened at a certain point fairly recently. Can you lay out the timeline of that, how long KPMG - how much we paid them, what they delivered and then why the contract was cancelled?

**Comm ADAMS** - Again, through you, minister, I'm going to have to be very careful in how I answer that.

**Ms WEBB** - Sure.

**Comm ADAMS** - There is a deed of release in relation to the parting of ways with the contractor. As part of that deed of release there are certain confidentiality requirements that cover the relationship with that contractor, and on that basis it's a very difficult situation for us to be able to give you any detail in relation to that at the table today.

**Ms WEBB** - You can give me detail about what we spent on KPMG, I presume, for the contract that they delivered up to the time that it was cancelled, how much we spent on them; and are you able to specify in some sort of sense what they delivered for that money?

**Comm ADAMS** - That's difficult because it is the reason that we've parted ways with -

**Ms WEBB** - It relates to the contract, yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - the contractor relates to that, so I need to be really careful about that. I've got advice from the Crown Solicitor before coming here today about how I can answer questions in relation to that, and I have to be very cautious not to breach what is in that deed of release.

**Ms WEBB** - What if you focus in on the money part of it, because that should be able to be disclosed during a budget Estimates hearing, I would've thought.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll look to Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - I'd probably have to take that on notice, the exact amount, and also to clarify whether you're asking just on Project Link or on the broader project.

**Ms WEBB** - No, I'm asking about Project Unify broadly.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - More broadly?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, from the time that KPMG were first contracted, which my understanding is might've been 2020 or thereabouts, something like that, through to the time that the contract ended. Yes. Thank you.

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**Comm ADAMS** - What I will do is go back and get some advice again from the Crown Solicitor around the terms of what is in the deed.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - And if that is obviously something I can provide to you, absolutely we will.

**Ms WEBB** - So we can put it through to you as a question on notice?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Then your answer might be, 'We can't give any more', or it might be, 'This is what we can say'.

**Comm ADAMS** - Absolutely, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Is this something in the same area or will we move?

**Ms WEBB** - I can come back to it potentially if we need to, but I do have a bit more on the same area.

**CHAIR** - I just had something in overview.

**Ms WEBB** - You go ahead, then.

**CHAIR** - This is just something that doesn't fit, I don't believe, into any of the other line items, and it's regarding the Retired Police Association. With regard to the pilot wellbeing support program for retired police officers - and obviously we want to look after the police after they retire - what's the current status of the program and when is it scheduled to start initially?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. We've been working through a process with the Retired Police Association and Tasmania Police. Obviously it's important that we're supporting our officers when they serve, and if there's an opportunity to support them afterwards, then we'll look to that.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Been grateful for the collaboration with the Retired Police Association. They provide volunteer support, and DPFEM wellbeing support services provide some resources to help them do that. We're working through the design of that process -

**CHAIR** - For trialling?

**Mr ELLIS** - for a trial. We need to be exceptionally careful. As the Treasurer and the Attorney-General in his role as Minister for Consumer Affairs have probably outlined, the

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workers compensation structure is - it's very important that we are considered when we're making changes to that. DPFEM -

**CHAIR** - We'll have workers compensation questions for you later, yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, that's right. It has a very sort of close overlay.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Because there is the ability for people to claim workers compensation in limited circumstances after their retirement, but changes to this, even small changes to this system, as we've seen in recent years, can have quite a large impact, and there are retired workforces across the Tasmanian public service, so, you know, retired prison guards, retired fire service personnel, retired ministers.

**CHAIR** - There are, but I guess we're looking at this one initially, so if you could let me know what the current status is of the pilot for the wellbeing support program for the retired police officers. Do you have any performance indicators that you can share? I notice that an *Examiner* journalist was advised recently that 'We're strongly committed to trialling the wellbeing support. Preliminary work on the trial has commenced'. So, are you able to give me a deadline for when the update can be expected, any detail at all, just to clarify?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. I suppose the reason for the preamble is those are some of the things that we're working through in the design of the trial.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Because as I mentioned, we've got to be exceptionally careful that we're working through this in a methodical manner, because small changes in the way that we do things may have significant impacts on our workers compensation processes. I'll pass to the commissioner and her team at Tasmania Police to talk through some of that work.

**CHAIR** - And if you're engaging, you know, with police officers, former and current, I guess it's really important to make sure, as you say, that you get it right, but just some information, because it seems to be very lacking at the moment.

**Mr ELLIS** - Happy to pass that over to the commissioner.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Comm ADAMS** - Through you, minister. Just to clarify the question, just specifically about retired officers or -

**CHAIR** - This one, this particular question, yes, is just about the pilot program for the wellbeing support program for retired police officers. Where's it at? What's happening? Are you engaging with police officers former and current? Because obviously current ones will be retired ones eventually. Just to ensure that the program meets their needs, so it's really to get an understanding both, you know, for the community but also for the retired police officers.

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**Comm ADAMS** - Through you, again, minister. We have a number of retired officers who are wellbeing support officers, so they're former officers that we've put together a training program so that they can provide wellbeing support in the same way as the wellbeing support officers provide frontline employees now.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - We do that to support our retired police officers to enable them to, you know, support each other through that peer support network. We also provide opportunities for wellbeing accommodation and wellbeing parking for former members and their families should they need that, with ongoing medical treatment in Hobart. And, yes, we do what we can to support our retired officers through the wellbeing program.

**CHAIR** - The service, though, hasn't been delivered. My understanding is that some former and retired police officers are experiencing distress with fewer options for support than their mainland counterparts, while they're actually waiting for the promised service to be delivered.

You're actually telling me that it's there already, that people are there already? Because my understanding is that people are waiting for this pilot service. I'm getting advice that, you know, some are very distressed because there's nothing there for them.

**Comm ADAMS** - Again, through you, minister, the wellbeing support program in terms of having retired officers as wellbeing support officers has been in place for over 12 months. That's the extent of the support that's provided through the wellbeing program.

**CHAIR** - So that's the pilot, the new pilot?

**Comm ADAMS** - No, it's not the pilot.

**CHAIR** - The pilot was the one, the pilot wellbeing support program for retired officers, the program that we're supposed to be getting the update on, that the media said the update would be coming shortly and that preliminary work on the trial had commenced with an update to be formally provided in the coming weeks.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - But this is the one I'm asking about - the pilot program that the officers are actually waiting for, and then I'm advised that some officers are experiencing distress with fewer options than their mainland counterparts. I guess I'd also ask that, you know, are we looking what other jurisdictions are doing to support these officers?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - You know, someone who's been an officer for all these years retires and the officers at our table want to know that when they retire, that they're actually well taken care of.

**Mr ELLIS** - No, I understand. As the commissioner has mentioned, we're working through a process on design of that trial, and we need to make sure that we're working closely.

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There's been some good work with RPAT on the particular scope of that trial, as the commissioner has mentioned. There's existing support, peer support networks.

**CHAIR** - So, no answer to when the pilot - regarding the pilot?

**Mr ELLIS** - I'd be expecting some -

**CHAIR** - So, no answer for the officers concerned?

**Mr ELLIS** - Chair, as I mentioned, we'd be expecting in the coming weeks, but we need to make sure that the design of this is right, so - yes.

**CHAIR** - I will continue to ask on the Floor. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - No, absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Ms Webb, you had a question.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, thank you. I just wanted to follow up on the other matter we were just speaking about before, because I'm just trying to track through sort of allocations of budget funding to the Project Unify across time and how that has shifted or changed or where we've landed. So, my understanding is that originally, or looking back to 2020, we had Project Unify. Phase 2 is what I think we were looking at, at that stage, and there was \$46 million allocated or budgeted for it.

So, I'd like to track through, in terms of that \$46 million allocated at that time, how much of that - is it expended? How much of it is expended? What's the breakdown of expenditure for that originally budgeted amount so that we can see how that's tracked over time? Has additional allocation been added into the mix over time, and if so, when and how much?

**Comm ADAMS** - So, again, through you, minister, and just to work through, Project Unify has a number of, I guess, projects, sub-projects that sit within it. It is a broad program of work. So, Project Atlas 2.0, there was an allocation of \$32 million to that particular core operational policing system, and that is an extension of the original project that we spoke about that delivered the intelligence capability.

**Ms WEBB** - So, that \$32 million was when?

**Comm ADAMS** - In the actual allocation of the \$46 million, there were sub-projects.

**Ms WEBB** - So, this was part of the \$46 million?

**Comm ADAMS** - So, this was part of the sub-project.

**Ms WEBB** - In 2020.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

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**Comm ADAMS** - Then Project Link, which we've talked about, which is the online crime reporting, and there was an allocation of \$1.75 million for that particular project. We had what we've talked about as the Project Thin Client, which is the interface for our intelligence system, at \$5.47 million.

The PINS replacement system is part of that project or that broad program of work - that's got \$4.1 million. Online reporting of sexual assault is around a million. There were other allocations to support other projects. As an example, Project Pantheon, which is the Justice Connect program - \$2.55 million of the \$46 million was allocated to support that program of works because the intention was to implement capability such as a prosecutor, which obviously has quite a significant capability uplift for us.

The forensic register had an allocation of \$1.8 million. The ESCAD server replacement had an allocation of \$2.8 million. We had \$0.37 million allocated to identity and access management. And there was also an allocation to do some scoping work around the firearms included in that, I guess, bucket of money.

**Ms WEBB** - Great. So what I'm looking for is tracking across from when that was allocated back there in 2020, what we've delivered on, what got spent, what didn't get spent and what's been added to over time, what more has had to be spent in each of those areas - as I'm trying to track across the project to see what's happened. You'd understand there's a lot of interest in project management, particularly around digital projects at the moment because of things that have come to light through other projects in other departments.

**Comm ADAMS** - Absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - So I'm just trying to get a sense, are you able to provide something to us that shows tracking over time about the budget allocations into this project space, and the expenditure in the project space?

**Comm ADAMS** - I think we can do that.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Great. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - We might move, if you're ready to move into 1.1. Or do you still have more overview?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I had another one I wasn't sure in the overview that may be relevant, or you can point me to a line item. I just wanted to talk about the oversight of the Integrity Commission around police misconduct. Does that belong in a line item or is it best dealt with here in overview?

**Comm ADAMS** - Probably overview, I would suggest, Chair.

**CHAIR** - No. That's all right. Thank you.

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**Ms WEBB** - It's my last one in overview.

**CHAIR** - At the end we can always ask more questions if we get through our line items.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. So, we clearly understand the Integrity Commission has a role, a statutory role, to play relating to police misconduct and oversight and investigation, when necessary, of that where any serious misconduct complaints have to be brought to the attention of the Integrity Commission.

The Integrity Commission may send them back to TasPol to investigate or may investigate themselves, and then anybody in a senior role - any commissioned officers have to - any misconduct complaints have to go to the Integrity Commission to look at. So, I'm just trying to sort of understand how that's functioning in practice.

I asked the Integrity Commission the other day about their access to the Tasmania Police complaint system - I think that's IAPro, is it? The complaint system. They said they don't have access to that. Why is that? My understanding is that in other jurisdictions, the oversight integrity bodies that oversight police issues of misconduct have access to those systems and can do appropriate audits and interface with that.

**Comm ADAMS** - So, again, through you, minister. The Integrity Commission would need to be deemed a law enforcement body. They are not a law enforcement body. It has been identified during the course of a previous review that they are not. So, what the current practice is that the Integrity Commission make requests through the Deputy Commissioner, who manages professional standards and complaint management within Tasmania Police, and we are very responsive to any request from the Integrity Commission.

We understand the importance of community oversight around our actions, and we support very strongly the role of the Integrity Commission and the role that they play in ensuring that we maintain public trust through the actions that we take in our daily interactions with the community. I'm not sure whether the deputy wants to make any other comments in relation to that.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes, through you, minister. So, I regularly meet with the CEO of the Integrity Commission and work through any issues or any things that might be coming up in the body of work.

There's an ongoing plan the Integrity Commission have, which is specifically about Tasmania Police, which includes a body of work over the next five years on what they'll do, including own motions and so forth. The last full review the Integrity Commission did of Abacus, our framework for complaints management, was done in 2021, and that's when it was raised about the access to IAPro again as being an impediment, but that legally they weren't able to get into it.

**Ms WEBB** - It's interesting because we're currently looking at bills coming through parliament that have Integrity Commission - for the *Integrity Commission Act* - but I'm not sure that's a matter being dealt with, which is an interesting one.

In terms of advocacy, which you've just raised, I'm interested in that because my understanding is that advocacies are divided into complaints and then internally raised matters.

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So when it comes to things that are referred to the Integrity Commission as per the act, are matters in either of those categories referred to the Integrity Commission, whether they come in as a complaint or whether they're an internally raised matter?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Through you, minister. Yes. So, I might go back just a moment to explain what they do get as far as our letter of understanding with them. As you sort of touched on, the bits that we do engage with, it's serious misconduct or whether a commissioned officer, that is a person of or above the rank of inspector or a person undertaking authorised higher duties at that rank, is subject to any complaint.

In effect, this will include all level 3 complaints, internally raised matters about all non-commissioned officers at level 3, as well as all level 2 complaints and/or internally raised matters about commissioned officers or those acting in that role.

So, that's very specific. Although they come in as internally raised matters, which will be our own staff reporting things, or complaints, which will be externally coming in through whether it's through the portal or otherwise writing to me, if they fit into those categories, they're all reported - have to be.

**Ms WEBB** - They're dealt with the same way, regardless of where they've originated, in that sense?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. And my understanding is - and I think you've mentioned - the Integrity Commission is supposed to regularly audit police investigation into misconduct. Does that also extend to investigations into criminal conduct by police officers?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Through you, minister. Absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. So, those are referred to the Integrity Commission also? Okay.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - That would be counted as serious misconduct.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, it would. Great. Thank you. I appreciate your clarifying this. I'm just trying to make sure I'm quite clear on how that oversight role functions.

Then, the other point I wanted to ask about was, we've had recent news reports indicating three police officers have been charged with serious criminal offending. Accompanying media commentary stated there's been an increase in serious misconduct being committed by police officers.

Now, that's media commentary, obviously, but I'm just wondering if you could respond to that, and if that is the case and that's factual, what do we attribute that to? Are there any factors that we can point to? And then also on the other side of that, are there any particular responses we're making to those factors to try to address it?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Through you, minister. Yes, there were some in the last, I think, six weeks. There were three, if not four, in a very short period of time, which is highly unusual. But I think that the most important thing is, when things do occur and there is misconduct or

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criminal offending by our sworn members, we deal with it straight away. Now, there is contention about why we put out media releases on that. The reason we do that is to be transparent that whilst we can't name the people, it's important that we are naming up when there is serious misconduct being investigated.

In relation to those three or four - I think it's four, actually - none of them are interrelated. They're all different matters. There isn't a pattern in those; it's just that there were that many in that short period of time, which even when I've met with the police association, we've talked it through. It's a concern that there were so many in a short period of time, but different parts of the state, different matters, and no patterns in there. Now, they are all matters that are reported through to the Integrity Commission as well.

**Comm ADAMS** - If I can, minister, just through you. Without going in and providing specific details, but each of the -

**Ms WEBB** - We're not looking for specific details.

**Comm ADAMS** - I note the behaviour related to each of these officers was outside of work. It wasn't an abuse of any police power, and the reassuring thing for all of us here as leaders of Tasmania Police is that our officers have responded as they would with any other member of the community in dealing with each of these matters, and obviously it's led to criminal charges in the same way it would occur with any other member of the community.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I appreciate that. There hasn't been an increase in serious misconduct that's either had complaints raised or bound to be the case?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - No, there's actually been a decrease in serious misconduct over that. In our reporting we did for the calendar year, we have had an increase in the level 1 reporting, particularly in our internally raised ones. I think it became prevalent, particularly in the media, that there were so many in a short period of time, so it made it appear that there had been an uptick, but it's not the case.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Appreciate that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I was going to move into 1.1, but I've just realised that perhaps workers' compensation might fit better in overview as well than it does in 1.1. Minister, workers' compensation rates relating to mental health injury continue to rise across your policing portfolio. One of the coroner's key recommendations following the inquiry into the death of police officers was the introduction of mandatory 6-monthly wellbeing checks.

Has that recommendation been implemented, as my understanding is psychological injury among Tasmania Police officers continues to rise, as does the government's allocation of funding to support injured workers. It would seem that it'd be wise to invest meaningfully in addressing the root causes of the injury in policing, rather than simply paying for it after the fact and obviously the more officers are impacted.

**Mr ELLIS** - Absolutely, Chair. Tasmania Police and DPFEM in partnership with Ambulance Tasmania actually has a nation-leading wellbeing support program. It's been a significant investment. Now, obviously, we're working -

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**CHAIR** - Has it been commenced, the one that the coroner recommended?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, this has been going since 2018.

**CHAIR** - The 6-monthly wellbeing checks, have they been commenced?

**Mr ELLIS** - I was probably more giving you the overview in terms of -

**CHAIR** - I'm pretty up to date with the rest of it.

**Mr ELLIS** - Great. Excellent. I'm happy to pass over to the commissioner to talk through the specifics.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question, Chair. In relation to wellbeing checks for our staff, we do that on a risk assessment basis. There are specific positions across Tasmania Police that are required to have mandatory wellbeing checks.

We then encourage supervisors and managers where they detect concerns in our members to refer them for wellbeing checks. I can give you some statistics. Last year, we had 987 wellbeing checks. Year to date on 31 March, we've conducted 737 wellbeing checks.

Our view is a wellbeing check isn't just the sole strategy in helping alleviate mental health-related concerns; it is a package of initiatives that we need to wrap around our staff. In particular, when they respond to critical incidents, we have a critical incident response program where there is a mandatory call and a follow up with our first responder.

In many of those incidents, that can require an individual having a referral to a psychologist. I can give you examples of the numbers. We had emergency responders contacted up to 31 March this year was 1574, and that relates to officers who have attended a critical incident.

**CHAIR** - Is that risk assessed, though? My understanding is from the coroner's recommendations that it was mandatory, and I know we've asked this question in the past. Officers can actually go, and I think there was - I'm trying to think of the name of the program that they could go and assess themselves.

**Comm ADAMS** - MyPulse.

**CHAIR** - My understanding is from the coroner's recommendations that it's mandatory for officers who don't be recognised as having attended but just might be quietly there in the background, and all of the sudden, something occurs. You're not planning to actually have a mandatory 6-month wellbeing check across the board for officers?

**Comm ADAMS** - I think from what we've got is multiple strategies to address that particular recommendation, and rather than mandating someone to turn up and go through a process to meet a recommendation when they don't feel that it's appropriate for them, we've got multiple ways of picking up those individuals, and as I've indicated, the critical incident stress program is an example of that. We will monitor. If we've got an officer who's gone to two or three critical incidents, then we will take the proactive intervention. We will allow people to use MyPulse at their own discretion.

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**CHAIR** - Is that recorded when they use that so you can actually see who's used MyPulse, or is it totally confidential?

**Comm ADAMS** - No, MyPulse is confidential and managed by an external provider.

**CHAIR** - So no one knows they've actually used it.

**Comm ADAMS** - Again, based on the feedback from our staff and also the clinicians, it needs to be confidential because a person needs to have trust in that capability and the support that they're going to get in a similar situation to going to talk to a doctor about issues, and we do not want our staff to view that program as being something of a -

**CHAIR** - Not to do it because all of a sudden, they'll be recognised as perhaps having a problem. Workers' compensation rates have increased, though, is my understanding. You've just got some figures. I'm happy if you want to provide them at a later time.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, I do. I have them right here. It will be easier for me to give you - I'm assuming you want just Tasmania Police, as opposed to -

**CHAIR** - No, that's fine. It just gives an indication.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll just get that when I find my paper.

**CHAIR** - A 3-year indication is good to actually -

**Comm ADAMS** - At the moment, we've got 219 opened claims that relate to Tasmania Police. Seventy-six of those, or 35 per cent, are physical; 143 are mental health-related or 65 per cent. We have 98 police officers permanently incapacitated. Effectively, that's 6.7 per cent of our total workforce, and we have settled, up to 31 March 2026, 30 claims.

**CHAIR** - And the previous year, just probably the mental, the physical, and the overall number. It would just get a picture. I'm happy to put it on notice. I'll put it on notice.

**Comm ADAMS** - I reckon that's probably best if we put it on notice, because I can only give you that. They're the settlements. You're actually after the open claims for mental health.

**CHAIR** - If I could put on notice just the difference between perhaps the last 3 years under those: the opened claims, the mental, the physical, permanent incapacity for the last 3, and possibly how long people have actually been off work. If I put it all on notice, it saves the time, and it puts it in one document, so that's fine. All right. Mr Hiscutt had a follow up first.

**Mr HISCUTT** - If you want as well, just on a broader sort of whole-of-government level, I understand the attorney is looking really closely at the workers' compensation framework more generally, because we've certainly seen this situation occur in other states around the country, particularly when it comes to psychosocial. It's really been an emerging area of workers' compensation, and it's important that we support our people.

**CHAIR** - All our emergency services, whether it be firies, police, we need to be looking after them, and I think it's of concern.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, absolutely, and ditto nurses, Corrections staff, all that. There's a whole range of parts of our state services around the country as well, and the treasurer noted that New South Wales and Victoria have done some significant reform to their workers' compensation. You need to get the balance right. The system needs to be fair. It needs to be affordable. It needs to be affordable. It needs to support people when they've been injured at work, whether that's in -

**CHAIR** - People need to feel cared about.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Exactly. Whether that's physical, you know, you break a leg, or it's psychosocial because you've been exposed to some of the really challenging parts of the job. That work, obviously, is being led by the Attorney, but it's been noted by him and the treasurer as well.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thank you. I do have a follow-up question from Mr Hiscutt and then Ms Webb and Mr Edmunds.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Just to follow up on that. Obviously, a key deliverable in this department is an extra 15 million per year for exactly this issue. It's clearly large. I'm just wondering, that's putting it as a key deliverable not as core funding. Do you expect that to be reduced after four years or is that the total outcome? Why is it that there is a key deliverable instead of just something that you need to account for?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. The workers compensation premium changes substantially. If you look at the growth in the premium since 2018, it's been enormous and DPFEM are one part of government that's had that challenge. It's an emerging challenge for other parts of government, and other states around the country are facing similar things as well.

It's one that we continue to work on with Treasury and, of course, DPFEM and other agencies who have frontline staff who go to work in challenging circumstances. That's something that we continue to monitor, and as each year progresses then we assess.

**Mr HISCUTT** - We've got 15 million going just towards claims or is it going towards the framework behind the potential changes that have come?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. I'll pass that to the team from DPFEM to talk through further.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. Thank you, minister, and through you. I guess, just to give you some context, our premium last year was 46 million. Our premium from 1 July this year will be 63 million, so that's an increase in 37 per cent. The government have supported us in an allocation of funds to help pay that premium with the \$15 million in the Budget. And I understand that that is a permanent allocation to help us with the rising costs of the risk management fund that manages the workers compensation scheme. It's purely for the policy of the scheme.

**Mr HISCUTT** - That was just a one-year increase there of the \$15 million, so there's some of change there. Why that's gone up so much or you've just gone back to the same - well, we're self-insured, aren't we? You've just gone to the premiums?

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**Comm ADAMS** - What happens with the premiums is an actuary -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. I'm wondering what that's a - yes. Go on.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. An actuary does an assessment of every agency each year. There are a number of factors as to why the premium increases. Every time there's a pay rise, obviously, salary costs go up, so they factor that in. The number of claims that you have, the costs to settle a claim, the FTE. If you have an increasing FTE count, that will also impact the risk assessment. That's how they then come up with a methodology around the risk associated with each agency which dictates what the premium is.

We think, at the moment, that the trajectory for us is going the wrong way in terms of the premium, and -

**Mr HISCUTT** - I'm just concerned if it can go up so much in one year, we haven't allowed any escalation, potentially, in that, so -

**Comm ADAMS** - As what has occurred previously, we provide the minister with advice in relation to the premium as part of our budget process and submission of risks. As I've indicated, the minister's taken on board that advice and provided an injection of funds to help us with the premium. I would expect if we were concerned around the premium in the next financial year, we would be doing exactly the same. We had done some work around where we think the premium is going to head, and we are bracing ourselves for significant increases in the out years.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Would I be able to ask - and happy to take this on notice - say, the last five years what the premiums have been, if you have that available.

**Comm ADAMS** - I can probably give you that if you're happy. Back to 2023-2024 it was \$20.4 million, 2024-2025 it was \$32.9 million, 2025-2026 it was \$46.5 million, 2026-2027 is \$63 million.

**Mr ELLIS** - That's tripled in three years.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - If you go back to 2018 it's about \$4 million.

**Comm ADAMS** - 2018-2019 was \$2.2 million.

**Mr ELLIS** - When we talk about the issue around workers compensation reform, even you mentioned before, Chair, around, sort of, post-retirement and things like that, small changes can have an exceptionally large impact and obviously, it's important that we support workers. It's important, as well, that we're helping them return to work, and psychosocial is really an emerging area that Tasmania and other states haven't - our scheme hasn't been set up for that as well. It's been set up for broken bones and that kind of thing - and how to work through that process.

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The investment we're making in the wellbeing support program, as I mentioned, it's nation leading. It's something that just as a volunteer firefighter I've really appreciated in my time as well. But the overall structure is -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Clearly not doing enough, but I'm not sure what the answers are. I'm sure you're working on that. Just to get an understanding - sorry, just to make sense of that. The numbers of actual people employed in the department, I wouldn't have thought, has changed significantly over that time. It would have changed, but the numbers wouldn't be outside of 20 or 30 per cent or something like that.

**Mr ELLIS** - We don't have 30 times more staff.

**Mr HISCUTT** - No. Yes. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Ms Webb and then Mr Edmunds.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Yes. I just wanted to follow up on the line of questioning that you were putting, Chair, around the coroner's report recommendations and the way they've been implemented or otherwise.

**CHAIR** - The way they do checks.

**Ms WEBB** - That's right. The coroner did recommend investigating the feasibility of introducing a point system where points are coded into IAPro or another platform to represent the category in sub-critical events a police officer is required to attend, with points being allocated based on severity of the incident, the officer's role in it and when an officer reaches a critical point threshold, an automatic referral to a psychologist is triggered.

Now, you've indicated that that's not the pathway you've gone down, that it's a more voluntary pathway and that you keep a track of severe incidents or things that officers might have encountered, and prompt them, potentially, after a certain number. Is that a formalised system that you use to keep track of the exposure of officers to these sorts of incidences?

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll go back, if I can, through you, minister.

**Ms WEBB** - I might have missed your explanation before.

**Comm ADAMS** - No. The director of wellbeing is very forward leaning in this space, and I think it's due recognition to the director that we've got a gold standard wellbeing service that is the envy of every other jurisdiction. We most recently provided some direct advice to Corrections in Northern Territory, and police in Northern Territory have modelled some of their program on ours. The Australian Federal Police has also sought a brief around our wraparound wellbeing service.

To go to the coronial commentary, we have, I guess, an advisory set of professionals who provide us with advice in the policy settings and how structure our wellbeing program. And the advice we received was not to do a points, I guess, scheme, but to do a combination of voluntary, some supervisory oversight, but some mandatory wellbeing interventions that come as a result of the critical incident.

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And as I mentioned to the Chair, if an officer does attend at a critical incident and we define what that looks like, they are then subject to a mandatory intervention. And the critical incidents are tracked, which may well result in someone having a further intervention order or wellbeing check at our initiation. We -

**Ms WEBB** - How does that tracking work? What system do you utilise for that internally?

**Comm ADAMS** - That is IAPro.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Comm ADAMS** - So IAPro has a component that has been structured for wellbeing. And as the director of wellbeing, he had previously worked within professional standards, he's very well across the capabilities that that system provides. They're very separate in terms of someone at professional standards can't go in and look at wellbeing information, but that's how we keep that information.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. That's helpful. But there's an element where a police officer has that voluntary - where they can access the system if they believe it's necessary, and it's, sort of, what you were saying before. But there is some sort of process that can come and override that if it's deemed that there's been significant enough incidences that that person's experienced that it warrants a check.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. Again, I guess, it's a holistic approach to wellbeing.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - Opportunities for the individual to elect to use MyPulse -

**Ms WEBB** - But you can come in over the top of that.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. Absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - I just wanted to clarify that.

**Comm ADAMS** - Wellbeing checks are mandatory for certain areas. Crash investigation services is an example of that. And also the Critical Incident Stress Debrief program.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. And in terms of another coroner's recommendation from a 2023 report around fatigue management, do we have a fatigue management policy in place?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - We do have one in place now. Is there a structured way that that's followed, that we ensure is implemented?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. The policy was developed in consultation with the Police Association and has also been subject to widespread consultation across the organisation, as

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you can appreciate, requiring supervisors and, in fact, each individual member has a responsibility about managing their own wellbeing.

There was a level of training that was required to be undertaken to ensure our staff understood the full extent of how you manage fatigue and the policy has been implemented. We have a number of work areas and individuals who are subject to individual wellbeing plans to help us manage the cumulative effects of fatigue. I'm not sure whether the Assistant Commissioner would like to just add some additional comments to the -

**Ms WEBB** - And maybe just before you do, is the fatigue management policy available publicly, or can you provide it to us so we can see it?

**Comm ADAMS** - I can provide it to you. It's an internal document that obviously is utilised for us, but there's no reason we can't share it.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. That'd be great, if you could table it.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. Probably the only thing to add is it was implemented formally at the start of this year.

**Ms WEBB** - This year. At what date?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes, in January.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. So, in January. It requires our members to report when they exceed a certain number of hours. So, 16 hours overtime in a two-week period was the setting we've set, and other incidents of fatigue. The reporting is via a fatigue management incident report.

When fatigue is noted, there's a requirement to develop a fatigue management plan, and the member works with their supervisory manager and develops a plan to manage the fatigue. There's an immediate intervention to say what's happening with fatigue. If there's a fatigue note detected with the member, immediate intervention, immediate action is taken to deal with that fatigue and any risk it might pose to the member or anyone else.

Then, if there's any ongoing issue, there's a fatigue management plan that's developed and managed and monitored, and we have - I don't have a number in front of me - but we have numerous fatigue management plans in place now just to manage that with our members.

**Ms WEBB** - And does that intersect with the - because my understanding is that you have different arrangements for overtime in terms of when overtime kicks in for officers who are stationed in more rural and remote areas than in urban areas. Is that correct? That there are different arrangements around when you'd have to log overtime?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - So it's any excess hours. When I say overtime, it's any excess hours that are managed.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

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**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - So anytime any member works at excess hours.

**Ms WEBB** - So what would be a standard working week hour?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - That's right. Yes. That's right.

**Ms WEBB** - So the fatigue management covers all that.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Exactly.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Appreciate that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Edmunds.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, just one quick one following up from before with the MyPulse, and minister, I think you'd probably be best placed to answer it because it covers other potential areas like Ambulance Tas.

Do you have the breakdown - I appreciate the comments about privacy - but do you have a breakdown in total numbers of people utilising that service? I believe that even the Parliament gets a report on who utilises the support program here, and if you do, I'd like them - and I can take this on notice - probably, again, over three years, and if there's a split between employees and volunteers utilising that service.

**Mr ELLIS** - I have MyPulse, total health screens completed, 3268. Are these the right numbers? Mental health screens, 1832; physical health screens, 1436; unique individuals completing a screen, 2066; coaching sessions completed, 5776; unique individuals coached, 1169. We actually had our emergency services conference the other day and MyPulse and the wellbeing team there were really front and centre.

It's just a good reminder, I think, for all of us who are involved in emergency services, about how much the culture is changing, that we can actually put wellbeing services kind of front and centre of the offering for emergency services, whether they're career or volunteer, and that's something people feel comfortable engaging with, which is really encouraging, that cultural change. Happy to follow up on the split between career and volunteer if we've got something like that, but it may not - I'm not sure if that will be available.

**Comm ADAMS** - We'd have to check.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - It's all right. Thanks.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Well, we have been in overview for a while, so if we start to go to some of the outputs and if we can finish those, we might go -

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Sorry, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Jonathan.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Can I just correct something?

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**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Because we're getting media inquiries about it.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Three people reported in that short period of time in the last six weeks, not four. I think I said three or four. Three. So, the media can calm down.

**Ms WEBB** - I said three, you said three or four, and then you actually said four.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - I know. So that's corrected and one other thing I'd just like to correct. I said there was a reduction in level 3s. There's actually been an increase in level 3s from 2024 to 2025, and it was - there were 25 either internally reported or complaints externally coming in in 2024. And in 2025 - calendar year we're talking about - there were 34. So, either internally raised or externally raised.

**Ms WEBB** - So 25 up to 34.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - So that's a fairly significant increase.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - It is an increase, yes, but I wanted to correct the -

**Ms WEBB** - About a 40 per cent increase.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. And so, can I return to my question then, if you don't mind, because the question I asked around that was: are there any factors that you attribute that to, or are there any efforts being made to address potential factors for an increase?

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - And I do see all these, of course. Nothing that causes me concern is that a spike in a particular area. There has been increased reporting in family violence-type incidents and sometimes between members as well that might be partners, but not necessarily to the threshold where there are charges being laid in all instances.

So, they are the reported things. Sort of the use of force, it might - use of force and how that might be used, whether excessive, might go as a level 3, and that changes investigation that comes. So that all goes through our academy and our operational skills unit, the management review area within the greater professional standards command - me now. Anything that might relate to connotation of criminal matters will be sent to the DPP. We won't make that decision to go through.

**Mr ELLIS** - Probably one of the other things to add, Ms Webb, is that there's been a really marked increase in the number of police-initiated reports against police, which I think, from my perspective and probably from the police leadership team, is an encouraging thing.

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**Ms WEBB** - It's positive. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - It's that changing the culture. So, like in other crimes where underreporting is actually a significant problem, where we see an increase in those crimes over time, you know, awful crimes like, say, sexual violence or family violence that we know have historically been underreported, as much as every person coming forward, that is a devastating outcome.

The fact that there is more trust in the system to be able to respond to those kinds of crimes than in the past is, I suppose, a good sign that things are changing. So, I think from a Tasmania Police perspective, the most trusted police force in the country, a lot of that is driven by the internal culture that's really emerging; if one of your colleagues has done the wrong thing, they need to be held to account and it's up to police officers, if you've seen something about another police officer, to say something. So yes, it's a kind of bit of a -

**Ms WEBB** - I agree with you on that.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I completely agree with you on those comments. Is that what the data tells us? Is that increase demonstrated that it's internally raised matters that have increased? Is that something you could break down maybe across those years so that we could see? You can come back to us with it.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - We have reported that over the last three calendar years. So an example with the level - say level 3s, I guess - we talk about -

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, which is serious misconduct.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Yes. So, in 2024 - actually, I'll go back one more.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm just checking to see whether the internally raised matters are things that account for the step up that we saw there from 24 to 25.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Okay. Internally raised matters in 2023 were four matters and there were nine complaints in the level 3 external coming through.

**Ms WEBB** - Overall? No, no. External, sorry.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - So was that 13?

**Ms WEBB** - Three and nine together is 12. So, we went from 12 in 23 to 25 in -

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Four level 3s in 2023, nine in level 3. 2024, there were 15 level 3s internally raised and 10 level 3s externally raised. And then for 2025 there were 19 level 3s internally raised and 15 externally at a time, so increases during that time.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - It's interesting, isn't it? I agree that it's not necessarily a sign that there are more issues going on, it's just perhaps higher reporting, which can be a good thing.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Let's move on to 1.1. We can always come back to Overview.

**Mr ELLIS** - This is almost like a house committee, Chair, spend a lot of time in overview.

**CHAIR** - There are a lot of areas in Overview, and we can come back, so we're really going to have short, sharp answers, minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - Sounds like a plan.

### **Output Group 1.1**

#### Support to the Community

**CHAIR** - 1.1, Support to the Community. Minister, Launceston police station is the only 24/7 police station, I believe, in the northern district. Given your government's planned reductions in health funding over the forward Estimates, what assurances can you provide that frontline police in my electorate will not be increasingly diverted from core policing duties to respond to non-core health-related callouts, and that these pressures will not compromise timely responses to genuine community safety matters?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair, and there are a few things to talk through, probably first around the investment at Launceston station, which has been significant, mainly around some of the ways that police are working closely with ambulance and clinicians as part of different teams that the name keeps changing.

So, I'll say PACER, but that will refer to a few things that have changed, and then maybe some work that we've done on the scope and role of Tasmania police so that we're making sure that we've got that real back-to-basics philosophy. There's been significant investment in the Launceston police station major refurbishments, and people will be seeing that when they walk through. There's been an increase in -

**CHAIR** - I'm aware of all that, and that wasn't my question, minister, and we do need to - let's, you know, keep our answers, you know, relative to the question. The question is: what assurances can you provide to the frontline police in the northern district that they won't be increasingly diverted from their core policing duties to respond to non-core health-related callouts?

I accept all the work that's been done at the police station, and I attend there quite regularly doing, you know, some volunteer work. But, minister, I just want to know the officers are aware that, you know, they'll actually be available for the callouts, that they're not going to be all of a sudden called on because of the cuts in other areas.

**Mr ELLIS** - There's significant work on the way that we care for and support people with mental health issues in the community. That's really important to talk through.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Because police do have a role when there's a safety element.

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**CHAIR** - And they do that now, I believe.

**Mr ELLIS** - The way that keep doing things better is working as part of these dedicated teams. I'll pass over to the commissioner to add further.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister. I guess a couple of comments.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - There certainly won't be a reduction of frontline police officers across the state as part of the budget efficiency process. We're very committed to maintaining our frontline numbers so that the Tasmanian community gets the best level of service that we can provide. We've built up a level of trust with the community, and we think that is attributed to having a good staffing model across the state, so I make that comment.

The minister did talk about PACER, which is a combined initiative with us and mental health clinicians and Ambulance Tasmania. It's a fantastic program, where they are first responders to mental health-related incidents that are occurring in the community, and when it works well they are able to take action in the community to help a vulnerable person who may be suffering from a mental health-related illness, and support the families, which can be quite confronting and, quite frankly, police officers are not trained to deal with. That particular program is highly regarded by all of us here and our frontline numbers, and we would love to ensure that that is continued to be supported, you know, obviously through this process.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - Then to come to your point, we have recently received a report. We undertook a body of work in partnership with the police association. We engaged ANZPAA, which is the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency. They're a research body that work on behalf of police agencies. And we asked them to actually undertake a fairly significant body of work for us to understand what's the core role of policing in 2026, and where's the scope creep, and where do we need to collaborate with our partners, I guess, to meet community expectations?

Very strong methodology of research - surveying our staff, engaging with our partners - and they're provided as an extensive report around what they've identified has actually changed in the Tasmanian context. It is fair to say that our staff do feel the pressures of having to support other agencies in the health, I guess, system, and there are some opportunities for us to look at the way we might rescope or redesign how we actually deploy police officers to some of these particular jobs.

Without going in and giving you a whole heap of detail about it, we've only just got the report. We've provided the report probably three to four weeks ago to the Police Association for them to have a look at it. We're going to set up a steering committee with the Police Association, and we need to work through what the options are and which ways we can rescope police response to actually address some of the issues that have been identified in the report. But it's fair to say that, you know, us responding to some mental health-related matters, some

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child safety matters, there are examples where there's scope creep, where they are not a police job.

I'll give you an example. I did a station visit at Hobart a couple of weeks ago, and I was talking to some constables, and, we were chatting around a whole range of things, and they got a call to an address which they had already been to three days earlier. It was from a family member on the mainland who couldn't contact their mum, and so wanted police to go and see

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**CHAIR** - A safety check.

**Comm ADAMS** - A safety check. They'd already done it two days earlier. So, I've provided advice in relation to that. Again, great customer service; our officers did that, and then, you know, we needed to put some follow-up because we could see that this was going to become a pattern of behaviour. That's not good use of police resources. We'd be better off asking the neighbour to go and knock on the door and see whether this particular lady is okay.

There are some things there that we can do, and our officers have looked to us to put the framework in place for them to operate. They want to support the community where they can, and it is up to us to work through this review and look at how we can redesign and rescope and put a better framework to help them make decisions on what jobs they go to and how they respond.

**CHAIR** - No, thank you. I'll just ask one more question, then I'll pass to Mr Hiscutt. Minister, you committed to delivering roster reform at the 24/7 police stations prior to the last state election. Can you advise this committee what meaningful and measurable changes have occurred at the Launceston police station - which as I said, that's one I know well in the northern area - since that commitment was made, and whether any substantive reform has actually been implemented on the ground?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. We've been working closely in collaboration with our frontline staff, the Police Association, and, of course, police leadership to make sure that we're delivering roster reform. This is a process that's gone on for a number of years.

**CHAIR** - Has it happened?

**Mr ELLIS** - The roster reform work is progressing, and I'll pass over to the Commissioner to talk through how that's going.

**CHAIR** - How it's going, and -

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. I'll just make a few comments, and then I'll actually pass to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar, who is chairing the roster reform working group. It is a good news story. Rosters are challenging. Again, going back to that station visit, I had eight constables and I had three different rosters they'd like to work.

What we're trying to do is to work through a process where we've got those who work the rosters in the room, we've got the union in the room, and we are working through the evidence, the science around fatigue, and trying to get a roster that also will allow us to meet our service delivery requirements and meet the standards that the community will expect that

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they're going to get a level of service when they call for a police officer. The roster working group, I'll hand over to the assistant commissioner. There has been some good change that has occurred through that process.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Obviously, you know, if officers are working long hours and they're tired, they go home upset, and it can - you know, family violence, all sorts of things can actually happen, and I think it all can reflect, so they do need to have good working hours as best they can. But thank you.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes, certainly, Chair, thank you, and through you, minister. As the commissioner's saying, we established a roster reform working group about mid-last year and we have representation from each of our seven 24-hour police stations. So, we have two members from each police station across the state who attend the meeting. We have two representatives from the Police Association of Tasmania and, as it turns out, both of those members are sergeants working at 24/7 police stations as well. So, we've got some good coverage.

As the commissioner said, I chair the meeting. I'm also supported by the commander in the western policing district, the inspector from Bridgewater, who manages a 24-hour police station, another inspector and the deputy secretary.

What we've been working through since August last year really is what options might be available that could be considered by the staff to work now, but there's some parameters that we've had to put around it, Chair. Effectively we have a frontline staffing protocol and in that protocol it dictates the numbers of police that we have to have working at any particular time at those seven police stations.

Now, they vary in Launceston and Hobart compared to Glenorchy, Bellerive, Bridgewater, Devonport and Burnie. But we have to have a certain number of supervisors working and constables at any set period of the day. We've got to work within those parameters, and we have to work within our staffing allocations as well.

Now, at the five stations I just mentioned, the last five, we have an allocation of 50 staff, certainly Devonport, Burnie, Bellerive and Bridgewater, and then 63 at Glenorchy. So, you've got to be able to make a roster work with the numbers you have, meeting those safe staffing numbers, for want of a simple term.

When we sort of reviewed and did an analysis of some of our staffing numbers back mid last year, over a three-year period, we certainly worked out that, whilst there's an allocation of 50, you need to take into account the number of staff you actually have available in the workplace to do the work because at each station, at each of those four stations, you're probably going to have at least six people on leave at any one time.

So straight away you're taking six off your 50. We want people to be able to undertake secondments where they can to other parts of the agency. We want people to undertake professional development courses where they can. We'd like to be able to run task forces, which we do across the state and of course, there's a range of leave entitlements that people can access as well.

**CHAIR** - And workers compensation.

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**A/Comm BODNAR** - And workers' compensation. You're quite right, Chair. To be able to operate some of the rosters, you've really got to take into account the numbers you have so that limits the rostering options that are available.

Through this rostering working group, it would be fair to say we've probably considered at least 12 different rosters, and we've had some really good, healthy discussions in that working group about the pros and cons. In some cases, a division might say, 'Yes, I think my staff would be happy to work that', and in another division, they wouldn't be happy to work it. So having about 450 people across the organisation who work at our 24/7 stations, it's really difficult to get a positive outcome. But what I can say -

**CHAIR** - Are you getting close?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes. As a result of the work we've done, Chair, we're now undertaking a trial at the Glenorchy police station. The trial was recommended by staff there. We went to a workplace ballot, and it was something like 87 per cent of the staff voted for a change in a trial roster.

They're currently working a six days on, four days off roster, forward-facing, two days of day shift, two days of afternoon shift, two days of night shift, then four days off. Bridgewater station has recently also put forward a proposal for a similar trial that's also been to a workplace ballot; that's an industrial requirement.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - There was a very positive response there as well and they're just in the planning stages now. So out of our seven stations, we will have two that are doing trials. The other stations are considering whether or not they want to stay on the current award-compliant roster or whether or not they'd like to shift.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - But effectively, we're consulting with the staff, and a lot of these changes are being driven by the staff up, not by us down.

**CHAIR** - No. Thank you.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - So consultation is quite heavy in relation to this process we're working through.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Appreciate it.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Interesting, the trial that you're trying at Bridgewater, where at Glenorchy it was 6-4-2-2-2.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Is it the same trial at Bridgewater or is it a different model?

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**A/Comm BODNAR** - It's effectively the same roster, but there might be some tweaks with the hours, because one of the things with this 6 and 4 roster is we don't have a dedicated training day fitted into it.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - So with our current award-compliant roster on our 24/7 stations, there's a dedicated training day where staff have eight hours to do their mandatory training, their firearms validations, online training, etc., etc.

So, whilst we don't have a day built into it, we factored in hours into that roster so they could do their training. As an example, one shift at Glenorchy might do some mandatory online training on a Monday afternoon, once the afternoon crew come on and there's a changeover in period, if that makes sense.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. This might seem like a stupid question, but are different stations able to eventually have their own model, or is the intent that across all stations it would be the same 6-4-2-2-2? Do you know what I mean? If it works for Bridgewater and that works for Glenorchy, are they allowed to operate different models or is the intent of this to have a model that's standard across the state?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - It's certainly not a silly question and through the Chair, it's really up to the staff at the individual stations as to what they'd like to trial and like to work.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - I mean, you could sit here and say, from one perspective, it would be easier if all the staff were working the standard roster, but we want the staff to have the involvement, have the say, have the workplace ballots and see what works. There are different demographics at each station as well, Mr Gaffney and so there are some nuances there.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That's good. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Minister, you'd be well aware of the scooters that zoom around Ulverstone. Someone told me the story about a family where the children left from Turners Beach on the scooter and the parents left in the car and they arrived with the clock at nearly the same time. Just wondering if you'd give me an update on what the rules are for e-scooters, like age, speed and power, and who is really responsible for enforcing those rules, if I could have an update.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Mr Hiscutt. I note Tasmania Police doing some good proactive patrolling and educational work in Ulverstone - I saw the other day - in a town that we both love. So that was really good. It's important that when young people, or not so young people, are using e-bikes and e-scooters, they're doing so responsibly. I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk through those sorts of road safety matters.

**Comm ADAMS** - Sorry, minister, if you're okay, Assistant Commissioner Bodnar is well across this.

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**A/Comm BODNAR** - Thank you and through you, minister, Mr Hiscutt, yes, I suppose there are two different categories we look at. There are personal mobility devices and then there are e-bikes, sort of to try and keep it as simple as I can. It does get a little bit complicated.

There have been some challenges in Ulverstone, and I'm also aware, one other suburb in the state, where our staff have been out working with predominantly some younger people who have been riding these devices. And I know of some occasions where they've spoken with the young people and they've actually contacted their parents and say, 'Hey, just for your awareness, this isn't legal' and in some cases, parents have come along, spoken to the police, collected their son or daughter and taken the bike.

But a personal mobility device, just to make sure that I'm correct for you here, if it's electrically powered and it's got at least one wheel, it's less than 125 cm long, less than 70 cm wide and 135 cm high, it's less than 45 kilos in weight - so as I say, this gets a little bit complicated - it's not capable of travelling over 25 kilometres an hour and it's designed for use by one person, it's a personal mobility device. Things like bicycles, motorised scooters, motorised wheelchairs and wheeled recreational devices are not considered to be PMDs, personal mobility devices.

Then there are rules for e-bikes, and there's two types of e-bikes. They're permitted under the Vehicle and Traffic Act and the road rules if they're either a bicycle with an auxiliary motor with a power output or combined power output of not more than 200 watts, or a power-assisted pedal cycle as defined by the relevant Australian design rule.

So effectively, there are two categories of e-bikes. A bicycle primarily propelled through pedalling, but it's got an auxiliary motor, and it can't generate any more than 200 watts. That's the first one. Secondly, an electronically power-assisted bicycle with a maximum continuous power rating of 250 watts, where the power is progressively reduced as the travel speed increases and it cuts off when it reaches 25 kilometres an hour.

So, what we've found in some parts of the state is we have had people - if I can use a colloquial term - tearing around on these things, creating dangers, in some cases probably travelling faster than some cars on the road. So, we've been looking at an education campaign, and I must say, from my most recent meeting with the Road Safety Advisory Council here in Tasmania, of which I'm a member of, the Road Safety Advisory Council are considering looking at an education campaign to better inform the public, and in some cases mums and dads, about what's legal and what's not legal, but I think there's probably some importing issues probably at the Australian level about bringing these things into Australia in the first place.

**Mr HISCUTT** - The question is a member of the public sees someone tearing around here in the streets of Ulverstone on a personal mobility device. What should they do? I've got an email from someone who almost got knocked over. They're quite concerned about that. Should they contact police? They've been told to contact council. There's a lot of -

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Certainly, it's a matter that we have been addressing, and you've mentioned it yourself, Ulverstone, certainly, Seven Mile Beach as well, we have had some challenges, but I think the good thing, from a policing perspective, we're really adopting that educative approach, particularly with these young people who may not understand the rules. As I've probably just highlighted here, it does get a bit complicated about differences.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - I know one of the concerns council had - they can put a bylaw in, but they were concerned with the idea of banning scooters, that it affected older people and mobility scooters and things like that that definition of the word 'personal mobility device' seemed like it wouldn't include. Is it just the number of definitions? If we got back to council and said, 'You can do it this way to exclude these things and other things' -

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes, I think so.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Where are those definitions?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - This is just a worksheet that I've had done up by one of my staff, but I'd be fairly confident that on the State Growth website, there's more information in relation to personal mobility devices and also e-bikes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you very much for that answer. I've got some other questions, but I'm happy to go to others first.

**CHAIR** - If you've got a question.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Minister, during our Tasmanian Parliamentary Friends of the LGBTIQ+ community forum in May, gay man Peter Power talked about the contact he's had with local police, LGBTIQ+ liaison officers regarding homophobic harassment by a neighbour, and Peter said the officer was very supportive, which was really positive to hear, but also very hard to find.

I've got a series of questions around that that I'd appreciate your answers to: what is Tasmania Police doing to ensure members of the LGBTIQ+ community are aware of their local liaison officers; how are we ensuring that staff in police radio rooms are aware of the liaison officer program and how to contact these officers; and how are we ensuring that there are liaison officers across the state and that they're trained to respond to various problems facing LGBTIQ+ people, including harassment by neighbours?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Ms Webb. I'll pass that over to the commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister. I'll just make a few opening comments, and then I'll hand to Assistant Commissioner Blackwood. Tasmania Police had worked with the community over a number of years to ensure that we are putting things in place and strategies in place to make sure that members of the community actually feel supported and that there will be appropriate action taken when they raise issues.

We've got a steering committee. Rodney Croome's a member of that steering community. We've got members of the LGBTIQ+ community on that committee and help inform, give us feedback around our policing practice and also ensuring that we've got our own support mechanisms in place to support our own staff. I'll actually hand over to the assistant commissioner, who can give you specific responses to the questions that you've asked.

**Ms WEBB** - Appreciate that.

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**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - The liaison at the high level, just when it goes through our commander with responsibility for community engagement, and within that sets the training and the communication that we do in this area. Our radio room certainly area aware of the liaison officer program, and it's on our website as well.

In terms of training for our liaison officers, we do that. We have previously done it with cooperation Working It Out, and they can provide the training with us as well. There is a refresh going on with that at the moment, as well as what our next 12-month action plan looks like, and working very closely with Rodney Croome in the development of what that plan looks like for next year, but you're right. Availability is a key one. When people reach out, they want someone there to contact. There's also an email address for contact as well.

**Ms WEBB** - That sounds good. Interesting to have feedback from a member of the community who said it was difficult to find their liaison officer and potentially had some issues getting navigation through your radio room, so perhaps that's useful feedback. You mentioned the action plan, which does come to an end 2026. Through you, minister and commissioner. You're in the process of developing a next iteration, potentially, of that action plan; is that the intention?

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - Through you, minister. Yes, that's correct.

**Ms WEBB** - The action plan speaks about having liaison officers in every geographical district. Have we achieved that goal, and if not, how close have we got to it?

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - We do have liaison officers all over the state, and around every year, 18 months, we'll call out for new liaison officers because people move across the organisation. To ensure we have that spread, we'll call out for more when we see -

**Ms WEBB** - And the current number that we have?

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - I can get you that.

**Ms WEBB** - If you can update while we're at the table, that'd be great. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Just wanted to seek an update. Obviously, part of this is the firearm reform and gun buyback scheme and that's got a key deliverable. Just wanted to seek an update on the government's expected timeline for that and just a general update on where that's at.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Hiscutt. So we're working through a process at the moment. The federal government's initiated the buyback, and then been working through negotiations with all of the states. No state's currently signed up to the federal government's buyback proposal as it currently stands, and there are a number of threshold issues for the Commonwealth but also for Tasmania.

From our perspective, we'd really like to see if there's a buyback process that's done in a fair way, because ultimately our law-abiding firearms owners have done nothing wrong, and

what we saw with the Western Australian buyback was that people were substantially penalised.

If you went out and purchased a firearm that cost a few thousand dollars, like the ones that were on sale at Agfest just the other week, the Western Australian government was taking those as part of the buyback process and then only returning a few hundred dollars. From our perspective, it's important that there's a fair compensation as part of that process, and we've been working through that.

More broadly, obviously the reforms that are really critical in this space, as we've seen from the royal commission, particularly over the last week or so, is around intelligence sharing. The situation with Bondi, where the terrorists at Bondi were able to travel to known terrorist hotspots, including Uzbekistan to get access to Afghanistan and also the southern Philippines, and that being known by Australian Federal Police and Australian Border Force but not shared with ASIO and New South Wales firearms licensing is deeply concerning.

With the other significant work that ASIO had done, including having one of the offenders on their watchlist in 2019 but also we understand that they were being watched in 2022 as well, and yet firearms were still accessible for them, that's also deeply concerning. What I suppose I'm saying there is that points to what the key priority is, which is better information sharing between agencies.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Does the Tasmanian reforms that were announced, does that have elements to that that affect that, and do you think that they'll be decoupled and put through as a separate piece of legislation than the other parts that were announced so that at least that can be progressed earlier while we're waiting for that? What's the plan for -

**Mr ELLIS** - That's right. You're right to identify it. The key part from our perspective is clearly better information sharing. That's what failed in the leadup to Bondi, and that's where the biggest gains will be made in terms of addressing this challenge.

The work that Tasmanian police has done on rolling out the National Firearms Register has really led the nation. We've been among the leading jurisdictions for reaching milestones, and from a Tasmanian perspective, that information sharing through the National Firearms Register where information is better shared between the states and the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth and the states, and between the states themselves will make a significant difference. That work was also undertaken off the back off a police shooting in Queensland, where I think two officers were killed, so that's really critical work.

We expect to be delivering that in coming weeks for consultation for the community, and there'll be some other elements there as well. As we've seen from just yesterday with the illegal firearms manufacturing factory that was shut down in Hobart, there are new technologies and new capabilities that are coming online more and more among criminal offenders. And Tasmania's really led the nation again in taking action on 3D printing, including with outlawing blueprints for firearms so that we can take action there. But, really, an important area of this is to stop criminals and terrorists.

We need to make it so that there are significant penalties for people who steal firearms, both for firearms theft but also the possession of stolen firearms. There are no excuses for those. Similarly, with 3D printed and firearms and ghost guns, effectively. So that package of

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work that will enable better information sharing, enable us to crack down on criminal and terrorist operatives will be critical. Negotiations are still ongoing with the Commonwealth, and no state has signed up to the buyback.

Most states have taken a similar approach to Tasmania in terms of the focus of the laws, and we've seen Victoria make recent announcements along those lines as well. We'd be expecting that in coming weeks for consultation. And then as we work through broader national negotiations, we'll have more that we can update.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Separate them out so we can progress the important parts.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. All right.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Thank you, minister.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. I've got other questions. We're happy to go?

**CHAIR** - In 1.1? Because we will need to move soon.

**Ms WEBB** - It's only a little one.

**CHAIR** - A little one?

**Ms WEBB** - We'll try.

**CHAIR** - I might just ask one about budget. One about budget just so I can get my budget for the police. Through you, minister. Where are the opportunities to make savings in the budget for Tas Police, given that we understand no frontline staff cuts. What are the opportunities to make savings in the budget and what are the efficiencies? Because, obviously, it's very difficult to make the cuts that are required.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. And, certainly, it's something that we're working through like all agencies across government. And we've been really -

**CHAIR** - And a nice quick answer if we can.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Absolutely. We've been really keen to focus on making sure that we can support frontline services while doing things more efficiently with new technology and some back-end savings. I'll pass to the commissioner to talk through some of those opportunities.

**CHAIR** - Yes. To how difficult it might be.

**Comm ADAMS** - It absolutely will be a challenge.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

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**Comm ADAMS** - Any budget cut, it forces you to look at how you do your business and what are the opportunities to rescope, redesign and restructure your business. As I've already said at a previous question, we aim to protect the frontline through this process. It's important, again, that we maintain the community trust and we'll do our best endeavours to ensure that we do that. The savings target for this year is just over 8 million, and what that - we will look at that, I guess, from a lens of two perspectives.

One will include salaries and one will be non-salaries. The salaries, we believe, will come from the redundancy program that the premier announced on Monday. We, as an agency, will also take the opportunity of having a redundancy program and try to identify some salary savings.

**CHAIR** - Is that less police officers?

**Comm ADAMS** - No. It will not be police officers. It will not extend to police officers.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Is there an FD account for that?

**Comm ADAMS** - At the moment, we've got a target, as in a financial target that we need to achieve.

**CHAIR** - Right. Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - We'll, obviously, be guided by that. But we will also look at opportunities, because the salaries that need - the savings we need to achieve increase each year. So, we need to look at whether we can achieve those through non-salaries or what is the component of salaries. So, we will look at the redundancy program as an opportunity and actually -

**CHAIR** - No forced redundancies?

**Comm ADAMS** - The program is not a forced redundancy. It's a voluntary -

**CHAIR** - Because we know these FTEs are actually people with families.

**Comm ADAMS** - Absolutely. And that's why I will say I want to be really cautious about my comments -

**CHAIR** - No. That's fine.

**Comm ADAMS** - And our restructure and redesign, because the first thing for me is I want to engage with our staff in relation to that, and I don't think it's an appropriate process to be giving information here without not first speaking to them.

**CHAIR** - No.

**Comm ADAMS** - Just in terms of non-salaries, some of the things that - and we've done, obviously, some work in relation to this as most agencies have. We think that we've got - just

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as an example. In fleet, we have a leased passenger vehicle fleet. We want to look at what the costs are associated with owning that fleet. We have dual leasing that occurs. We can be more efficient in that space. We want to look at vehicle servicing. Some of the vehicles are serviced in-house. We may well be better off, and it may well be more cost-effective to do that externally, and, of course, there's going to need to be fleet rationalisation.

We certainly want to look at the opportunities with technology. We will move from just simple things like, traditional desk phones for soft phones. We have an extensive portfolio of -

**Mr ELLIS** - Sorry, commissioner, you want to talk about soft phones are, just -

**Comm ADAMS** - Soft phones. That's, essentially, Microsoft Teams.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I understood that, Felix.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Excellent. I wasn't assuming it would be you.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I didn't.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister, for helping with that one. We have an extensive portfolio of laptops. Obviously, that's an operational tool for our staff. There are other ways we can look at it. And one of the things that is upsetting our leadership group is our move to Collins Street. We're, effectively, pulling eight floors of staff into two floors at Collins Street, more of an open-plan -

**CHAIR** - Going to be hot-desking.

**Comm ADAMS** - Sorry?

**CHAIR** - Are you going to be hot-desking?

**Comm ADAMS** - There will be a little bit of that.

**Mr ELLIS** - Soft desking.

**Comm ADAMS** - But we know it's got to start with us, and the tone is set by us. So if that means that there's some rationalisation with accommodation and it does start with us, then I think - yes. As I said, the tone is set for the rest of the organisation. And we will anticipate a \$1.4 million saving from that move on an annual basis. So, you have to do it.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - There are a number of other things on a non-salary space that we'll explore.

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**Ms WEBB** - On a salary space, overtime must be something you're also looking at, because that would be something significant, presumably, that could be looked at management.

**Comm ADAMS** - Overtime is absolutely included, but we've already seen some efficiencies gained through the roster reform group. So, the previous roster, and I think I've spoken here before around the costs associated with running the six-on-six roster, let alone the fatigue concerns that we had with our roster, it relied heavily on overtime to make sure we met our minimum staffing numbers. The work that the roster reform working group - and I want to compliment the assistant commissioner and those on that working group.

They've come in with a really pragmatic view of knowing that we've got a service delivery expectation for the community, and we have seen a downturn in the overtime.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We have 15 minutes before a break and we are not going back into 1.1 after the break. A quick question.

**Ms WEBB** - Lost property management. My understanding is that we don't have a centralised system. We have a station-by-station system, and I was a bit bamboozled when I understood that. Why don't we have a centralised system so that, for example, if I lost my watch over in Bellerive and it got handed in at Glenorchy, currently, my understanding is, you wouldn't be able to link those two things together and I wouldn't get my watch back.

Presumably, we've got a centralised system for things like stolen property that's seized or the property that comes in through activities of policing, as it must be a centralised system. Why isn't lost and found part of that?

**Comm ADAMS** - We have a number of paper-based reporting mechanisms, and that's the reason for Project Unify. The property module is actually a module that is included within the scope of that work.

**Ms WEBB** - It is. So lost property is included in the scope of Project Unify?

**Comm ADAMS** - I will look to my expert up the end there.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. The property module includes lost and found. It would replace all those paper-based processes that you've heard.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. Okay. And what's the expected timeline, then, on full delivery of that?

**Comm ADAMS** - I will be very cautious in giving any timelines on an ICT project.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Well, what's our ballpark? Is it going to be this year? No?

**Comm ADAMS** - No.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Is it going to be in the next three years or out beyond three years?

**Comm ADAMS** - No. I would like to see that it will be within the three years. What has become really obvious to us - and this happens with every ICT project. We've gone out for a

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tender and you work your way through, obviously, your project. And what has happened for us within this three-year period is the complete transformation of technology, the emergence of AI.

At the moment, we've actually paused the project and we're actually looking at what are the technology opportunities that exist right now, and we need to make a decision as to whether we will continue with the technology that we initially went to tender for.

**Ms WEBB** - It might need rescoping in a sense.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. In a sense. I'm committed to making sure frontline people have the tools to do their job in an easy way, and, obviously, the Chair has asked questions around the feedback of the version 1.0. We need to respond to that feedback, and we need to give them the tools that are actually going to help them do their job. I'm not going to apologise for the fact that we've paused the project to make sure that our decision-making moving forward is going to set us up.

**Ms WEBB** - I understand. That sounds sensible. So is someone doing a piece of work for you at the moment to look at potentially rejigging the project and incorporating -

**Comm ADAMS** - We're in the process of engaging with someone to do that now.

**Ms WEBB** - Contracting someone in.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - So they're not yet contracted.

**Comm ADAMS** - There is a process. I think the procurement committee met yesterday, but I wouldn't like to jump to what the outcome of that discussion was.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Gaffney.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I'm asking this one question here because I think we're going to 2.1 next, and I was on the board of which group it fitted into. I go back to your opening remarks, minister, where you spoke about the increased numbers of police force. My question is around how you determine a permanent station. I'm not sure which officer will take over from this.

Here's the example: in the Port Sorell township, there are increasing reports of burglary, trespass, vandalism, and theft that often peak in the summer months when there are a lot more people out there, which does create concern for the community, and as you would realise, Port Sorell's really grown over the last 20 years in number and lots of services. Port Sorell does have a police station, but like a series of Yes Minister, it's like having a hospital without a patient. The police station remains in pristine and unused condition.

There are anecdotal reports and a few Facebook comments that there was a pre-election promise that if the Liberals won the election, there would be a full-time police officer at Port Sorell. There were a couple of good comments on Facebook that made me smile.

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Can you update me on that situation? It is a growing community. It is getting quite large and bigger than Latrobe, actually, the township of. I'm just wondering: has there been consideration for a permanent place out there, even over the summer period? That's the question.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Gaffney. I'll pass over to the commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister, and I'll also ask Assistant Commissioner Bodnar to give some additional detail in relation to this. I'll just make a few opening comments. We consistently look at our service delivery model, and where our police officers are actually stationed, what stations are opening, and what are their opening hours. That is a constant. Obviously, we do that on the basis of mapping crime data and trends, public order issues.

Another consideration for us in terms of where do we put our people is always enhancing the safety of our officers, and that for me sometimes doesn't lend itself to a single-person response, and we're always looking towards bringing police officers together in hubs. We have even one of our members of our leadership group who has a property where you're talking about, Mr Gaffney, so has a keen interest as well, but I'll hand over to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar to give -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes. Just on that, now that Port Sorell has its primary school as well, it might be an attractive place for a police family to actually make their home. Do you know what I mean? I'm interested to know what the future is.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - Through you, minister. I might start with this one. Yes, to the vested interest in that particular place, of which my family have for over 60 years. I have a house there, so I do understand the challenges there because we have the Facebook things, and there are many of those who view - I know what you're talking about - when things are reported or comments made.

That area is covered by Latrobe, so there are people stationed at Port Sorell, but they work off Latrobe roster, a bit like Scottsdale in that sort of sense. They're a non-24-hour station. There are regular patrols through there. The station is manned, I would say, sporadically, although there's an inspector who does work out of there quite often as well. I can say, hand on the heart, that I see a lot of police cars there. Whether the deputy's heading up there and they say, 'Release the cars', I don't know, but it's -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That would be Yes Minister.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - It's very interesting. That happens when I go up the highway, that I see cars as well. I do understand the challenges there, but the roster itself that is worked out with the two sergeants from Latrobe does cover that adequately. The increases in that area can be seasonal as well, as you pointed out. Probably 15 years ago, we used to do secondments over the summer periods there for that. It hasn't been a one-person station for 20 plus years. In fact, it still worked off Latrobe at that stage when the member who retired there still lives in the community, and I do see him quite often as well.

It's one of those situations where it's unlike those country clusters where we have Rosebery, Zeehan, Strahan, where they are essentially that single-type person or families and

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so forth go there, and they work a very on-or-an-off roster. The Latrobe roster, because it's only 10-15 minutes from Devenport, is supported really well from Devonport 24-hour station but has that full coverage, 7 days a week, on that non-24 hours into the wee hours of the morning to actually do that and a very proactive leadership group in western district that understand that the deputy does have a house there as well.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, because as a growth area, Port Sorell is one of those that will expand and will go west, and it's getting up there where there are all the other services. I'm pleased then that potentially down the line further, there could be that opportunity for that permanent station.

**Dep Comm HIGGINS** - No, I wouldn't say there's a permanent station. No, I certainly wouldn't say that we'll be doing that, but it's a situation - Latrobe Council are very forward-leading and very good engagement with the police there as well. In fact, they're very good at actually putting out newsletters about the plans for the future and so forth as well, including the school, the aged care facilities, the shopping centres, and pathways and so forth that are down there, but it is still very well served by that and road policing.

There was an instance only a week ago when I was there with a hooning incident, where road policing did respond to it and deal with that situation in the - would've been the crack of night, even, over the weekend. I do understand the challenges of an expanding area, but expanding area does not necessarily mean it's going to increase in crime because there is a range of families and demographics who live in that area, and people are more willing to live in those areas and travel to work in Launceston, which is fascinating in itself that that would be the case, but it is.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Did you have a quick question?

**Mr HISCUTT** - I think mine would probably fit in the next output.

**Mr ELLIS** - Chair, we have also had a quick update on workers' compensation numbers.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - We do. The question was: can we give the data going back? I'll give you the open claims. For 30 June 2023, the number of open claims was 170, 63 physical and 107 mental health; 30 June 2024, we had 201 open claims, 59 physical, 142 mental health; 30 June 2025, 249 open claims, 82 physical, 167 mental health; and as of 31 March 2026, the open claims were 219, 76 physical and 143. Just in terms of officers that are incapacitated, again, going in reverse order, 30 June 2023, we had 86; 30 June 2024, we had 106; 30 June 2025, 104; and 31 March 2026 was 98.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. The time now being 10.58, we will stop the broadcast, please, and return at 11.15 with 2.1: Investigation of Crime.

**The committee suspended from 10.58 a.m. to 11.16 a.m.**

**Output Group 2.1**

Investigation of Crime

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister and we will now go to 2.1, which is investigation of crime. Mr Edmunds.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you, Chair. A fair few of the questions I had were covered in 1.1. but Minister, at the 2024 election, the government announced what it called a strong plan to crack down on crime. Is the government, or are you, still committed to recruit 60 more police, taking numbers to a record high of 1521 full-time officers?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. We're certainly still committed to cracking down on crime and our work to bring Tasmanian police recruits to a record level has been paying some really strong dividends. We've worked closely with the Police Association of Tasmania and the police leadership as part of the EBA negotiations to focus more on retention rather than recruitment, and part of that was providing a significant pay rise for our officers by reallocating that commitment.

That's been a partnership that we've worked through together and certainly with the supportive vote that came through from Tasmania Police members, that's been really encouraging. So of course, we'll continue to look to make sure that we're delivering the police numbers that Tasmania needs and supporting recruitment is what we've heard from our frontline people that they are really wanting us to focus on. And so, the significant pay rise in those frontline areas by reallocating that commitment has been really well received.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. How many police officers are there today?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk through the numbers.

**Comm ADAMS** - The police establishment is 1459.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Just while I think of it, Chair, I might also just table the Tasmania Police fatigue management framework. I think Ms Webb was after that one.

**CHAIR** - Appreciate that. Thank you.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Just to be clear, because that's pretty much a gap of just over 60. So, is the target still to reach 1521?

**Mr ELLIS** - No, I think we've covered off on this, Mr Edmunds. We've reallocated that commitment towards a higher pay rise for police officers, particularly in those frontline areas, as part of more of a retention strategy, which is certainly the feedback that we receive from members and also from police leadership as well. So, it's been a good partnership to reprioritise the funds for that commitment into the area that we think will deliver the best outcome for our workforce.

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**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. And that feedback was provided after that commitment was made or in the lead up to it?

**Mr ELLIS** - Sorry?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I assume there was some consultation done to make the announcement of 60 more police, but then you've said that you received feedback that that wasn't the path to go down.

**Mr ELLIS** - So we reallocated as part of the recent enterprise bargaining agreement. So that's been a 2025-26 process.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. So where did the 60 police come from? Did that come from consultation as well? The policy.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, as you mentioned, it was an election commitment and certainly, we've had a strong track record of delivering increased numbers of Tasmania Police, particularly off the - reversing the cuts that you made of 108 police officers.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Mate, I wasn't here. You weren't even in the state.

**CHAIR** - We're not going to get political, minister. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Well, sorry, Chair, but if Mr Edmunds is saying that's a mistake from the Labor Party or he's trying to disown the decisions that were made in the past, I think that's -

**CHAIR** - Well, let's say from now we will not be political. Mr Edmunds, the same.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - There's a difference between talking about a party and using the word 'you', perhaps.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Okay.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - So just to be clear though, just because we've beat around the bush a bit - so that commitment about the 60 more police is gone. Is that correct?

**Mr ELLIS** - As I mentioned, we've made the funding available, but we've reallocated it to a retention process as part of the EBA.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - So it's gone.

**Mr ELLIS** - And I'll just look to the commissioner if there's anything further to add.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thanks.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, minister, through you. Just a point of clarification. There was an announcement of 60 through the election.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes.

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**Comm ADAMS** - Through the EBA process, and you know, they are without prejudice negotiations. The 50 was renegotiated, as the minister said, to a retention strategy of investing that money into the police officers who are working on the front line. But 10 of those 60 had been allocated, so it's actually 50 that were invested into the retention strategy.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - So the cut is 50, not 60.

**Comm ADAMS** - Correct.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Minister, I believe earlier this year police undertook a major training exercise in Launceston designed to test response capability to active armed offender events. I'm just wondering if you can advise how these types of exercises are used to improve response preparedness and if there's any further plan in the future.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Hiscutt, and I'll pass to the Commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll actually go straight to the Assistant Commissioner of Operations.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes, thanks very much. And through you, minister. Yes, we conducted two exercises, one in March and one in April this year and that was really around testing our preparedness and our response to an active armed offender incident that could occur anywhere in Tasmania. We based these exercises on obviously tragic events that have happened nationally and internationally.

There were some key focus areas for us, effectively, around our response to a time critical incident as it unfolds. Looking at our interoperability between our frontline responders and our SOG operatives as well when they arrive on the scene, we also considered our communications and the effectiveness of our communications and that shared situational awareness and decision making under pressure.

As I say, it's around the preparedness and response. What that has done, I believe, is it strengthened our understanding of roles between our frontline responders and our SOG members when responding to these incidents. It provides us additional confidence with that interoperability because as you can imagine, when one of these events does occur, it can be quite chaotic in the first, you know, 20 minutes or so of attendance at the scene.

It certainly reinforces the importance of short, sharp decision making in a very dynamic environment. And I think it probably provides, overall, hopefully, a better level of assurance to the community that we do train, and we are prepared when necessary to respond to these incidents.

So, we've got that capacity and capability in the state to respond. And if there is any CT-type incident in Tasmania, the Commissioner has the overall responsibility for that immediate response. Then we call in our law enforcement agency partners from the mainland where we need to. But I think also when you think about crowded places, the work we do in

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crowded places, not only here in Tasmania, but also nationally, it probably also raises the profile there.

One of the other things we do is hold some crowded places forums throughout the state, both the north and the south of the state. We invite business owners and operators to come along to talk about some of those contemporary issues, I suppose, around CT, the threat level, what it means, escape, hide and tell: so, what the business owners can get their staff to do or customers to do, which helps us in that immediate response phase.

So overall it's pretty positive and I'm looking forward to seeing an evaluation report at some stage into the future, just to have a look at some learnings that we could take on board and consider for training into the future.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Great to hear. Thank you.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I might just ask you, minister, with regard to Taskforce Raven and Saturate. I've just received a letter only last week from Marco Ghedini, our commander in Launceston, outlining some of the results for the Northern Division, just to say with Taskforce Raven, 206 arrests, 142 summonses, 1826 charges laid, 406 offence reports. So can you advise me with regard to the proposal that may come online to change the age of criminal responsibility to 14.

If that is the case, or if that becomes the case, how will you actually deal - through your minister, it's probably to the commissioner - but how would you actually deal with people under 14 committing crimes? I'm just wondering, if that does come into effect, what processes, or what do you have in place? Noticing the work that Raven and Saturate are doing in stopping recidivists and obviously youth, and hoping to stop people going further into crime, if they're caught early, they might realise the error of their ways. So, what can police do?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. And so probably a few things to clarify there. So, our dedicated task forces that are focused on recidivist offenders, they primarily actually target adult offenders.

**CHAIR** - I was talking about Raven, which is youth offenders.

**Mr ELLIS** - Raven, Saturate and Scelus.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Exactly. I did mention those.

**Mr ELLIS** - Where Scelus is the Western District one.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - They primarily target adult offenders and it's particularly those repeat violent offenders who are small in number but cause a lot of the - a very disproportionate number of crimes in our community. Certainly, there will be some real practical implementation challenges of any raise of the age of criminal responsibility, and that will be something that we'll all need to work through, as, you know, the government's committed to all 191 recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

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**CHAIR** - Can I have an understanding, perhaps from Tas Police, what avenues might be open to them?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, absolutely. I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk further about, yes, some of the practicalities of what this would mean.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister, and through you. Firstly, the lead on minimum age of criminal responsibility is the Department of Children and Young People, yes.

**CHAIR** - No, I understand that, and we have them tomorrow.

**Comm ADAMS** - And the timeframe is 2029.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - We are obviously a key stakeholder in the planning that is being undertaken at the moment to set the policy settings and what the legislation will look like. That has required us to be involved in some scenario planning, because we do see some challenges in relation to the change in minimum age, things such as custody, the use of force. What actual role police take in a scenario that, you know, might confront police officers really does need to be thoughtfully considered.

Again, you know, we'll ensure that we're an active player in the consultation process to ensure that DECIP understands the challenges that we might face when we're called at 2 o'clock in the morning to someone - a young person - who's broken into a home. And so there is a really clear line of responsibility about what our responsibilities and powers are and, yes, what are those of the child safety services. I have said publicly and often, there needs to be a community conversation in relation to this. I think that -

**CHAIR** - Community safety?

**Comm ADAMS** - On this issue of minimum age of criminal responsibility, we have business owners who have provided us very strong feedback that they don't support the approach. From our perspective, we don't want to see young people going through the criminal justice system.

**CHAIR** - No.

**Comm ADAMS** - But we do need a clear, defined role and understanding what our responsibilities are. If we don't get this right, you know, then there is the opportunity for, you know, considerable failure in not supporting a young person because we haven't got the settings right. So, we'll continue to engage with DECIP.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - As I said, 2029 is the timeframe for the change.

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**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - We'll put forward the challenges as we see them so that they are appropriately considered when the policy's developed.

**CHAIR** - No, look, I appreciate that, and we can ask them some questions tomorrow. It was just that it was raised when I was reading the northern commander's sheet, where he outlined from Taskforce Raven the successes they've actually had. No, thank you. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Minister, I was going to ask you a couple of questions around some matters to do with firearms involved in crime. It was heartening to see the government's announcement earlier this week on moves to recognise and address coercive control in our community, and we know unfortunately there are instances where family and sexual violence incidences can involve the use of firearms, firearm weapons or the threat to use firearm weapons.

My question is about that intersection there. Obviously not seeking any identifying details at all, but can you provide a breakdown, numerical breakdown, of how many reported incidents of family violence that have occurred over the past five years in each year included the use or the threat of usage of a firearm, even if it wasn't actually discharged or utilised in the crime?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, minister. I'll pass over to the commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you. I'll ask Assisting Commissioner Blackwood. I think we probably all went to firearms, but given it's a family violence -

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, sorry.

**Comm ADAMS** - That's okay.

**Ms WEBB** - It's focusing on the intersection with family violence.

**Comm ADAMS** - We'll see whether we've got that information in the brief.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - I haven't -

**Ms WEBB** - And just while you're - I was just going to say, while you're looking, what I'm interested in is the number of incidences when responding to family violence there was a firearm involved in some way, and also whether we know if the firearm was registered or not.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - Through you, minister. I can tell you we do record if a firearm is involved in an incident, including even if it's a threat of a use of the firearm. That's definitely recorded on our family violence management system. I'll get the actual statistics for it for you.

What is always the case, if there is - where the order is taken out against a perpetrator in these incidents, if they do have a firearms licence, that's immediately revoked as part of the police family violence order or the family violence order, and their firearms are seized. I'll get you the actual number of jobs.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'd like it if, I suppose, the previous five years, if we could get them, just so I can see what the movement is. Thank you. Then following on from that, are you able to provide a breakdown of how many incidents that a police or emergency services personnel arrived at to discover a firearm was in the vicinity, even if it was not being used in a threatening manner? Do we record that, or is it only if the firearm is actually involved in whatever the activity, the specific criminal activity, is? Do we check whether -

**CHAIR** - Could I just check whether - sorry, just to have the microphones closer as well. Thank you.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - Through you, minister. I think that would be recorded as one and the same.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - Threat or use of a firearm is a particular offence.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Comm ADAMS** - I think just on that, if that's okay, minister, what we have received are a lot of questions in relation to data to do with firearms over the last few months.

**Ms WEBB** - I bet.

**Comm ADAMS** - We've got an active public reporting mechanism for members of the community to go and look at crime reporting. We want to extend that to have a specific level of reporting for firearms and firearms-related incidents and when firearms have actually been present or used in a crime.

That dashboard is in the final stages of being ready to go live, and it quite possibly could go this week or next week, which will help members of the community understand how prevalent firearms are being used, how many people have got firearms, how many licences and just to help with the many questions that we do get in relation to firearms.

**Ms WEBB** - That sounds like a positive way of opening up data and letting it be seen publicly. Will it have some historical data in there so people could see what might've tracked across recent years compared to where we are now?

**Comm ADAMS** - It doesn't have historical. It's actually live and it's updated every day. It will go back.

**Ms WEBB** - So reporting on the current year or -

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, in the current year, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - But not previous years necessarily?

**Comm ADAMS** - I don't think so, but I'll check in relation to that, because I think it does - we do have that same mechanism in place for just general crime reporting.

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**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - What we're trying to do is to obviously ensure that people can get the information that they're obviously - you know, as I said, there's a lot of media, there's a lot of members of the community.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - It's far easier to put those reports onto the system.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm a big fan of putting data into the public domain.

**Comm ADAMS** - I know you are. I know you are.

**Ms WEBB** - So the more we do it, the better it is, as far as I'm concerned. Can I ask one other firearms-related one?

**CHAIR** - Yes, very quick, then we'll go onto Fisheries Security.

**Ms WEBB** - It's just related to special operations group. Minister, special operations groups transitioned from a part-time unit to a full-time unit in 2024. How many times over the last year, and comparatively, say, the last five years, has the special operations group been deployed to attend an incident?

**Mr ELLIS** - In general or incident relating to firearms?

**Ms WEBB** - In general. In general, for the moment, and then I'll have a follow-on question.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Yes, for sure. I'll pass that over to the team from Tasmania Police.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister. Again, I might just flag with the assistant commissioner. I can give you deployments from 1 December 2023 to 31 March 2026. There were 118 SOG deployments. In addition, there were 1358 frontline assistance tasks that they also attended.

A frontline assistance task could be simply their presence when uniformed officers execute a warrant. It could extend to more support to frontline, undertaking a search or, you know, trying to plan for an arrest. They're not SOG deployments that require the higher level of approval, because we've effectively got our SOG full-time squad operating day-to-day in support of operational police.

**Ms WEBB** - Sure. Are you able to break that down across annual data?

**CHAIR** - And perhaps take it on notice if it's going to be something that will take time.

**Ms WEBB** - Then the thing I'm interested in from that is, how many of those incidences where the SOG was deployed involved firearms, and how many of those firearms-related incidents involved registered or unregistered firearms?

# PUBLIC

**Comm ADAMS** - Firstly, I'd say that remembering the SOG was only established as a permanent capability in December 2023, so that's the limitation, I guess, of our statistics.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Okay.

**Comm ADAMS** - In terms of firearms, I look to the A/C about that level of detail.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Just through the minister. I think probably that information would be discoverable, but it might take us a little while just to be able to access it for you.

**Ms WEBB** - Can we pop it on notice?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes, please.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

## Output Group 2.2

### Fisheries Security

**CHAIR** - If there are no burning questions now in 2.1, we could move to 2.2, Fisheries Security. Mr Gaffney.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes and thank you. This one shouldn't take that long, I wouldn't think. For those people listening, this is to do with overt and covert sea patrols and import at sea and fish processor inspections. The department is able to target offenders, facilitate the protection and security of marine resources in both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, and ensure the safety of vessel operators. I'll ask for the numbers of incidents that you might have had in 2024-25 and then the number of incidents, if that's what you call them, in 2025-26 to do with this sector, because the line budget has remained quite constant.

I've got no questions about the budget responsibilities, but my other two questions while you're getting that information: have the recent cost-of-living challenges in our wider community made any difference in the marine offending rates and trends? Because of what's happening financially, has that been reflected in the number of incidents that you might have catching the wrong-sized fish or taking that?

The second one: how are the new rules on the sand flathead conservation efforts going? Are we seeing acceptance and compliance, or have there been breaches of the south-eastern zone ban and the new filleting rules? That's all I have with the fisheries along that line.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Gaffney. I'm happy to pass over to Tasmania Police on this one. The offences have been largely stable except for rock lobster, which is interesting, but happy to pass to Tasmania Police.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister, and hopefully, Mr Gaffney, I cover off on the many issues just in relation to that question. You are correct that our funding allocation to marine operations has remained relatively steady over the previous years, and that includes a statewide coverage where we've got a full-time workforce of 33 members, obviously, dedicated to marine operations.

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We're supported by a fleet of 33 vessels, which includes offshore patrol vessels and specialised response vessels. In regards to enforcement and compliance, I'll throw to Assistant Commissioner Oosterloo, who will have the numbers and could also cover off on the flathead.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes, I can. So, your question's mainly about commercial fishing, as opposed to recreational, if I understand it, Mr Gaffney, or you want a bit of both?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - A bit of both. I just want to hear about what sort of incidents have, the numbers, yes.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - 'Incidents' meaning interceptions and sections of offending?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - In our capture of total marine offenders, we've seen a significant increase in this financial year from 1076 in 2024-25 to 1402 this financial year. Now, whilst that might indicate an increase in offending and that sort of behaviour, some of that is attributable to our enforcement activities.

During that last financial year, the *Van Diemen* was offline. One of our large vessels was offline for a significant portion of that while we were going through the sale of the old *Van Diemen* and launched the new *Van Diemen*.

We did have lower activity during that previous financial year, but certainly, we've ramped up our patrols and our efforts and have seen an increase in our detections. Most of those relate to recreational fishers.

Our commercial offenders have actually reduced in that period. We had 54 commercial marine offenders detected in 2024-25 and 44 in this last financial, and that is a year-to-date figure that I'm quoting, so it's apples for apples, but certainly, recreational offenders, we've seen an increase. Fisheries offenders, we have seen an increase of about 130 fisheries offenders total, but again, that's mainly the recreational fishing space, and it's not necessarily the commercial offenders.

If I've answered that part of your question, I can move to the flathead. As you're probably aware, the closure and new requirements came into effect on 1 March this year, but obviously, we've been enforcing the rules prior to that. I don't have specific figures from 1 March, but what I can tell is you we haven't seen significant levels of noncompliance since the new rules.

Anecdotally, I can tell you we've actually had a reduction in the number of detections in the flathead fishery from when we compare it to this time last year. In 2024-25, we saw six detections of taking excess sand flathead in the southern sand flathead region. Across the state, we saw 31 detections of take, buy, sell or possess oversized flathead, and we saw 72 offences detected of taking undersized flathead in that period.

Those numbers have dropped this year. In terms of taking excess sand flathead in the southern region, six, and then in terms of oversize, we only had nine detections in this financial year, and 45 detections of undersize in that same period.

# PUBLIC

We've seen a slight reduction in the detections, and generally speaking, anecdotally, the feedback from our marine officers is we've seen a good level of compliance in recent months in relation to the new rules.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Just two quick questions following on to that: of the people who are offenders, do you have repeat offenders? Do you have two or three people who might get caught up four or five times? Is it nine different people? What's the usual -

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - I don't have that detail to hand, but certainly, we would have repeat offenders. In the fishing community, we've got 29,000 registered vessels and about 60,000 boat owners across the state. It is a reasonably large community, but it's also small in comparison to the population. If someone's prosecuted, we will see repeat offending, but I don't have those numbers for you. I don't think that'd be significant, but yes, we would definitely have a level of that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Last one: do you think - and this is a general comment - the message about the flathead changes is out there? Do people say, 'I didn't know', or is the fishing community very well aware or well informed about the changes? Do you have any comment?

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Through you, minister. We have experienced situations where our marine officers will intercept a vessel. The person we found in breach of the conditions will say they weren't aware. Whether or not that's true is another thing. It's a bit like, 'I didn't realise I was speeding'. It can be a convenient excuse, but, again, I'm only speaking anecdotally from feedback back from our officers.

People do get a little bit confused around the rules because they have changed. Every year, they've changed pretty much over the last three or four years, but we do a lot of work to educate people and make sure we are passing on that message on in all our interceptions, and there's been a lot of publicity over the new changes.

I can't really answer your question, speaking on behalf of the community, but there would be a level of sometimes uncertainty with some people. Certainly, people will tell us they didn't know the new rules. If they're found to be in breach, we can use discretion and issue a caution at times, depending on the circumstances, but I think the rules are reasonably well understood.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you very much. I don't think I've ever caught an oversized fish, actually. It'd be hard to throw back, I'm told, but thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - You're part of 90 per cent of the fishing world, Mr Gaffney.

## **Output Group 2.3**

Support to Judicial Services

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If we have no further questions in 2.2, we go to 2.3 Support to Judicial Services. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I'm interested to hear responses around the concerns that've been raised over a lack of National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) crime scene forensic accreditation.

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It goes to both the ability for justice to be fully and transparently delivered, as well as providing Tas Police and our courts with reliable, fit-for-purpose tools. The question I had around it is: can you confirm that Tas Police is the only police service in Australia to not have this crime scene forensic accreditation, and if so, what plans are in place to secure this important accreditation?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass over to the commissioner.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll ask the deputy secretary, Ross Hinkley.

**Mr HINKLEY** - Thank you. Through you, minister. As you mentioned, we are NATA accredited for the ISO/IEC 17025, and separate to that, we've got a process underway with an independent consultant looking at our forensic capability, which is taking into regard a range of things, including that new standard that you mentioned, and looking at how we can work towards those new accredited arrangements. It's a process that we're looking at, and we'll have a report by November. It's looking, in essence, at what we do, how we do it, and how we can transition towards that new arrangement.

**Ms WEBB** - It's an internal review and report that's going to be delivered by later this year into what a pathway might look like towards accreditation; is that what I'm hearing you saying?

**Mr HINKLEY** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - If we ask questions at the end of the year or this time next year, we should be able to get an update on what the plan is to bring us up to being accredited?

**Mr HINKLEY** - Yes, on what we do now and how to move towards that.

**Ms WEBB** - Is it anticipated that that would require investment into our resources there, and is that then potentially an impediment given the constrained environment we're in and operational efficiencies being looked for, do you think, minister? Is this an area that might hold us back because of cuts?

**Mr ELLIS** - There's been significant investment in Forensic Science Service Tasmania over recent years: a range of different technology uplifts, and that's been important, obviously. We are NATA accredited, looking at the other accreditation and working through that process. But I'll pass over to the team from Tasmania Police.

**Comm ADAMS** - Can I just have a point of clarification, Ms Webb? Are you referring to Forensic Science Service Tasmania as opposed to the internal work that Tasmania Police does?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I think I am.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. That's all right.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm ADAMS** - Just wanted to get a clarification on that point.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Do we have any further advice?

**Ms WEBB** - I've got more. Can I keep going?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - On this line item.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Quick questions and we'll have quick answers.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Okay. I'm looking at the Forensic Science Service Tasmania technology uplift project, which is 2022 to 2026. So, the Forensic Science Technology unit briefly summarised on page 189 of budget paper number 2, the table, which is on also page 194, details that funding for this initiative has wrapped up. Presumably this is the same uplift project 2022 to 2026 detailed in the annual report for 2024-25, and which invested in critical scientific instrument and laboratory infrastructure.

Probably what you're referring to, minister, as investment. We heard in the attorney-general's scrutiny hearings earlier this week that judicial and court services demand is escalating in both magistrates and supreme courts. So, what modelling has been done to assess our specialist and accredited forensic services and whether they have the capacity to meet and support the growing judicial demand.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass over to the team from Tasmania Police.

**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister. Again, just to reiterate the deputy secretary's comments, in terms of the review that we are undertaking, we want to ensure that we're best positioned to provide quality forensic services into the future and it's always important to stop and have a look at where we sit and compare ourselves to other jurisdictions.

We're also acutely aware of the pressures in the courts. We've participated in Lloyd Babb KC's review of the backlog with the Court of Petty Sessions, and we've had a number of discussions regarding forensic service testing and how we might consider the implications that the testing may have on the backlog.

Again, just to reiterate the importance of the review, it's not something we've done before. I think in getting that report we get a real opportunity to have a look at comparing ourselves to other jurisdictions, and if there's a requirement for us to have an uplift of equipment or staff, we'll go through the budget process as we do each year.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - I've got more, but I know you've got to move on.

**CHAIR** - Have you got one really quick question?

**Ms WEBB** - I doubt that it's really quick, but I can -

**CHAIR** - Well, if you can put it on notice or -

**Ms WEBB** - Perhaps I can ask for - get a quick response on it and then I can follow up on notice if I need to. How about that?

**CHAIR** - All right.

**Ms WEBB** - My understanding is that part of support to judicial services provided by Tasmania Police is assistance in the delivery and implementation of strategies and programs to divert minor offenders as well as at-risk youth and young people away from formal court proceedings. So, the question is: how much resourcing is set aside to maintain this diversionary program work? Is it here in the budget papers? Can you point to a number or give us a detailed breakdown of the number of diversionary programs for the last 12 months or how resources have been directed into that space?

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll make a couple of, again, opening comments and I'll ask Assistant Commissioner Bodnar. Firstly, it's very difficult to give you - to quantify the amount that is committed to diversionary programs because output number 1 effectively has our salaries, police and state service salaries, across that particular output. So, it's actually very difficult to then draw them out to a particular activity.

**Ms WEBB** - How much activity is into that space?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. The second thing, in terms of diversionary programs and practices, we've seen, I would say, a dropping of the numbers of those young people willing to participate in a diversionary program because the number 1, I guess, criteria to be able to consider diversion is the young person has to admit the offence.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, we've spoken about this previously.

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, we have spoken about it, and it continues to be an issue in terms of the reluctance of young people to enter into diversionary programs. So, I'm not sure whether -

**Ms WEBB** - And this is a statutory issue?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Is this a legislative issue that we still have not yet addressed?

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes, it is. Yes, I understand it's been identified in the Youth Justice blueprint, and yes, we've certainly identified it as part of our liaison, but we are hamstrung at the moment in terms of what we can do and I think the Assistant Commissioner can probably give you some statistics and I think we probably have last year as well, I think.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes. Thank you and through the minister. I'll just touch the wave tops here because I'm conscious of time. I suppose the commissioner's right; we have seen a bit of a downturn in youth diversions across the state. Looking at figures through to 31 March this year, we've had 600 youth diverted. Now, that could be an informal caution, formal caution,

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or a community conference. That compares to 704 for the same period in the previous financial year. So, a decrease of about 100.

**Ms WEBB** - But are you largely attributing that to this issue of the young person having to admit that they're guilty to the -

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Well, I think that's a key issue, to be honest with you, Ms Webb, because at the end of the day, if the youth doesn't admit their responsibility in that crime, we can't divert them.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - We are bound by the legislation. The Commissioner's mentioned about some potential change in the future, but as you know, we've got to abide by the principles, firstly of the Youth Justice Act and then the requirements within the act, and there are quite a few of them. Again, I could talk from anecdotal evidence, from talking to some of my commanders, inspectors and staff, that is a challenge for us.

There is a perception, rightly or wrongly, amongst some young people, that if you don't admit your offending, you'll go off to the court and there won't be too many challenges for you in court. Now, that's a perception. So, I'm not commenting and I'm certainly not making any disparaging comments about the Justice Department or the justice system.

We do have Youth Crime Intervention Units throughout our southern district, northern district and western policing district. They're headed up by a sergeant or an acting sergeant, and there's a small band of constables who work within those teams. They deliver the formal cautions and also are engaged in the community conferences.

And as you'd be aware, through the principles, it's about not treating a youth more harshly than what we would do with an adult offender. It's about getting them to accept responsibility. It's about allowing the victim to be part of that process, but it's also about holding the young person responsible for illegal behaviour as well and protecting the community. So there's probably not much more I could add at this time.

**Ms WEBB** - No, that's fine. Thank you. I appreciate the update. We'll have to follow up elsewhere around the legislative issues.

**CHAIR** - No. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Chair, we've just got an update on a matter we took on notice, I think. A/C Blackwood.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - I'll tell you on two matters. So in terms of our liaison officers, there are 24 around the state at the moment. In terms of your question around firearms used in family violence, the statistic we record is where a family violence incident involved an actual firearm or the threatened use of a firearm. And I can give you each year if you like, so 2021-22 there was actual number of incidents, 4164, and of those there were 69 involving use of a firearm.

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**Ms WEBB** - Do you think this is easier to give us as a table?

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - I can do - provide.

**CHAIR** - If you could provide it.

**Ms WEBB** - Time wise it might be helpful.

**A/Comm BLACKWOOD** - Yes, I can do it. Sure. That's fine.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - That'd be good. Thank you.

### Output Group 3.1

#### Traffic Policing

**CHAIR** - If we could move on to 3.1, traffic policing. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Minister, in all other areas of the Budget we seem to see a decline in the forward Estimates, but traffic policing, pleasingly, is continuing its upwards trajectory. Just wondering, does that mean they're working at peak efficiency already?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Hiscutt. Can I pay tribute to our amazing traffic policing services. We now have a dedicated road policing service in Tasmania Police which is very encouraging. Our strategy that we often talk about internally is safe homes, safe communities, safe roads. So, it's really right up there in terms of just such an important part of the way that we look to serve the community.

So broadly speaking, we're getting some excellent results with road traffic policing, looking to support them with some new legislation when it comes to hooning, road rage and some other forms of offending. I'll pass over to Tasmania Police to talk through around efficiency opportunities and whether they exist within traffic policing. But obviously, again, the strategy is focused on kind of the back-end services doing things more efficiently and certainly in road traffic policing there'll be opportunities there as well.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll actually throw to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Thanks, commissioner, and through you, minister. I think there's some really encouraging signs there for us and we are really pleased with the efforts and the outputs of our staff: not just road policing staff though, our uniform members across the board, because we've seen a really good uplift in relation to output and effort from the staff. And I say that even though there's performance targets listed in the budget chapter, when we look at it holistically, we've had about a 10 per cent increase in detections this financial year to date compared to the same period last year.

If I was to look at the financial year for 2024-25, we had about a 23 per cent uplift in detections. Good for the fact that our staff are out there - they're working hard and they're detecting people breaking the road rules - but it's disappointing that it continues to occur. This

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year where we currently sit we've detected just over 3800 more motorists doing the wrong thing on our roads. Our detection rate is above our five-year average at the moment, which is good.

I suppose when I think about where we sit with fatal and serious injury crashes across the board, we have seen a decline this year to date. That's the financial year to date. We're down by about 13 per cent, which is encouraging.

When I look at fatalities, again, there are some encouraging signs, because where we sit from a calendar year from 1 January, whilst it's encouraging, it's disappointing, if that makes sense, because we've seen 11 people die on our roads this year since 1 January. But if we compare that to the same period in 2025, it was 22, okay. Effectively we've halved the fatalities, but there's a lot more to that and there's a lot of variables involved, not just police enforcement. There's a range of things that impact across that.

I suppose whilst we have our overall road safety strategy, which expires this year, the Towards Zero strategy, our target was less than 200 fatal and serious injury crashes. Disappointingly, we're not going to achieve it. We won't achieve it, but we're still going to continue to work hard. State Growth are currently leading the development of the new strategy, which will take us into the future.

But when I sort of sit back and reflect on where we sit compared to some other policing jurisdictions, I find that some other jurisdictions have also seen a decline in their fatalities, whereas there are two that have seen increases, and I say that looking at a four-month period for this calendar year, comparing it to the same period last year.

When you look across Australia we're still challenged, because we see gradual increases each year in fatalities. So, it's a challenging environment, but I must say I'm very pleased and very proud of the efforts of all of our police in doing what we're doing to bring the road toll down.

But I also am realistic enough to know that it can turn within the space of several weeks. We have evidence of that from a couple of years ago, where in April we had double-digit fatalities, and if we reflect back to 2009, it was either June or July we had double-digit fatalities then, and we had 63 people killed on our roads - 63 deaths. And a lot of those are needless deaths.

When we reflect on the data over the last four years, we see vulnerable road users overrepresented, such as motorcyclists. Our enforcement activities are designed to keep everyone safe. That includes the people that are doing the wrong thing. So, I am pleased with where we're at, but there is still work to do.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you, officer.

**CHAIR** - Do you have another question?

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, thank you. I remember in last year, six months ago, a discussion that there had been a significant drug-driver incidence increase identified. I'm just wondering whether you can tell me - because it's identified as drink- and drug-driving offences. I just

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wanted to know whether that is continuing to escalate seriously or whether it's plateauing or if there are any trends there.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Anecdotal is fine.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - From a review of recent data, I have seen an increase in drug-driving when it relates to methylamphetamines drivers, and roughly I'm going to say it's up about 200 on where it was last year from the financial year-to-date perspective. We see a decline in drink driving but we do see an increase in drug driving.

When I look at some of our performance targets across the board for drink and drug-driving offenders, we set ourselves a target of 3792, because we have to have something to aim for. As of late last year, we'd achieved 3479. It's disappointing that there are that many people out there drink- and drug-driving -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. It's a pity the target is not zero, but you've got to get them, yes.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - but we're detecting them. The really disappointing thing for us as a leadership group was when we looked at some of the results out of an operation we ran from Party in the Paddock up in Carrick in February this year. One of our inspectors stood up in the media and said we were going to be at Party in the Paddock.

It's about public safety, it's about crime prevention and it's about road safety. We stood up and we said what we're going to do. Part of that was around a road safety operation. And on the final day of that event, we had our staff from all around the state from our road policing services joined up for a pretty significant operation and, disappointingly, there were 58 detections for drug driving.

We sit back and we shake our heads some days, because we're not hiding anything. We're coming out and saying what we're doing and we get these results. It sort of goes against the grain a bit as well, because traditionally with our largest-scale operations we don't get as many detections. So, we were pleased with the efforts of our staff but disappointed with the community and the results that came out of that.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Sorry.

**Mr HISCUTT** - If I may continue, I was just going to say, do you think the infringement is a sufficient deterrent, or is there work that needs to be done there legislatively?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - I think the powers that we have and the authority we have to do the work we do is good. In relation to penalties, it's probably a matter of government policy more than myself, if I could sort of defer back to the minister on that one. But I think the legislative realm that we work in is suitable at this stage.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Thank you.

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**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - It's a worthwhile discussion.

**CHAIR** - A very quick question from Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, just a quick question. Moving on from the mobile speed camera system, which has, I think, been really successful, I'm interested in our fixed speed cameras that are under the purview of Tas Police, which I think is all the ones that aren't on bridges but are on highways, and how many we've got in that system, and are they all operational currently? Are there periods of time that they are non-operational? And can you give me data about the last, say, three years in terms of their operability?

**CHAIR** - That sounds like a question that maybe could be taken on notice.

**Comm ADAMS** - I think it's a very quick answer, if I can, Chair, and through you, minister.

**CHAIR** - Is it? All right.

**Comm ADAMS** - All of those cameras are no longer an active program and haven't been for -

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Several years.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. So, we don't have -

**Comm ADAMS** - Yes. The full speed camera program is run by State Growth.

**Ms WEBB** - None of the fixed ones operate anymore. When did that cease?

**Comm ADAMS** - They got to end of life, and -

**A/Comm BODNAR** - If I could, through you, minister. It varies for different sites across the state. We've got about, I would roughly say, nine or 10 fixed sites across the state, and the days of when they came out of life vary depending upon when the camera put in and update requirements and servicing and things of that nature. The commissioner's right; the whole speed camera program is now managed through the Department of State Growth, and they'll -

**Ms WEBB** - With the mobile units?

**A/Comm BODNAR** - Yes, the mobile units and the fixed speed camera sites. When I say 'fixed speed camera', if you think about the Tasman Bridge and the Bridgewater Bridge, they're pretty much spot speed camera sites. They're fixed sites. Then there are a number of trailers and a number of vehicles, which is managed through State Growth.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Over time they've dropped away, the other fixed ones that were on highways and things run by TasPol?

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**A/Comm BODNAR** - Again, with the evolution of time, you know, some of those fixed camera sites may not be in the best place for nowadays, if that makes sense, so we've got to be pretty flexible and agile in our approach to road safety.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr ELLIS** - The mobile ones are way better.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

If we go to 4.2, State Security and Rescue Operations.

## **Output Group 4.2**

### State Security and Rescue Operations

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, thank you. I've got several questions here, but I'm aware of the time, so what I might do is just ask a couple and I might table a couple that can be answered later, mainly to do with the state security and AI, but we've spoken about that yesterday.

I see that there's an increase and that's been attributed to the cost for the helicopter service contract. If you take that contract out, was the funding consistent? I suppose I'm saying now the contract for the helicopter service could've been \$10 million, and it looks as though it's only gone up by - so just a comment on that would be really handy.

**Comm ADAMS** - Again, though you, minister. Yes, a very stable allocation of funds. The helicopter is attributed to the variance.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. That's fine. My second question would be, there's been some community pushback on cost of search and rescue for ill-prepared visitors to our wider areas, and that I'm wondering is there anything that can be done to address these concerns and mitigate the lack of preparedness in some visitors, and especially those cases that have resulted in tragic and avoidable deaths?

I'm not saying that we don't do it; I'm just saying how do other states manage, or do other states manage it differently for the cost of what it might be for people who just, you know, need our services and then travel back home?

**Mr ELLIS** - This is a really interesting area, Mr Gaffney. We have incredible wild places, but they can be very treacherous and people can go to them unprepared. The other kind of element as well is around people who are very frequent users of these kinds of services, and we do have some members of the community that are more regularly users. Obviously we don't want to deter people from, you know, triggering their EPIRB and getting rescued.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - No.

**Mr ELLIS** - But at the same time, you know, how we work through that, there's a community conversation to be had there about what's the appropriate way to allocate those costs. But I might pass over to the commissioner to talk through some of the broader issues.

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**Comm ADAMS** - Thank you, minister. And really, just to echo the comments of the minister, I mean, we have a community safety responsibility. The Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements make it clear that Tasmania Police is responsible for search and rescue, but we do get frustrated by the lack of lack of planning and preparation on behalf of some who enter into our great state to do walking or camping or iconic walks and, obviously, then necessitate the requirement for a helicopter evacuation. It's very expensive, it's very costly and at times it can be quite dangerous to our staff.

There's a particular rescue that I recall on Frenchmans Cap where an unfortunate death occurred, and it was a significant retrieval operation to be able to get that body, at great risk to our own staff. So, we do have the responsibility. We'll always put community safety at the forefront of our decision-making, but the helicopter is also a very costly tool and capability that is normally a requirement for many of our search and rescue operations.

Yes. We would just encourage there to be, I guess, more communication around the planning and the use of EPIRBs and being prepared for some of these walks.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. Are we aware what other jurisdictions do along this? Is there a difference or is that how all police across Australia work? Or is there different -

**Comm ADAMS** - I'll hand over to him.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. In terms of cost recovery, off the top of my head - and we have done some consultation with other jurisdictions around this - there aren't any other jurisdictions doing it. Now, forgive me, there may be one that has done some cost recovery through some arrangements - a legislative arrangement, but my understanding is if there is, there's not many of them doing anything cost-recovery-wise.

Most jurisdictions have some sort of cost recovery arrangement, like us within the ambulance - the provision of ambulance services. Most others will provide that. So, air ambulance services or helicopter used around our medical or patient transport has cost recovery in the legislation. We have that function. It's managed by Health, obviously.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - And most of the other jurisdictions have something similar, including reciprocal arrangements between jurisdictions around that. But from a police search and rescue perspective - yes. And I might be corrected if there is one jurisdiction doing it, but certainly other jurisdictions take the same view of us around it's a delicate situation where we don't want to deter people from calling for help, and we take the safety of those people as our highest priority.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Two more quick ones.

**CHAIR** - They have to be very quick because -

**Mr ELLIS** - Chair, can I just, while we're - just table what Ms Webb was after on firearms data.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - Just it would be of interest. I'd be interested and I'm sure the public would want to know, say, in the last three years, how many times - and you can put this on notice and bring it back - how many times in the last three years has the helicopter been used in Tasmania for a rescue operation? I'd be interested to see what that would be.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - Yes. I can give you - I may not have that helicopter over the last three years. I can tell you that in the last year, the helicopter was being used for 127 search and rescue missions.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**A/Comm OOSTERLOO** - There were 399 total search and rescue missions over this last financial year, so 30 per cent - roughly 30 per cent of those cases are helicopters being used. And I've actually got some statistics that might help answer your question around how many were Tasmanian, how many were interstate -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Anything you could say there, perhaps, in comparison to the year before as well, so we can see what that number is. We'll put that on notice. Yes. And you could table it while we're still here.

My next question goes to support for volunteer services, and I do have one particular case that I'd like to raise. And this is my last question. Volunteer Marine Rescue is an essential service. With its Ulverstone branch it operates under the direction of the police across the Wynyard, Burnie, Devonport, Ulverstone, Latrobe Council areas.

As one of the four units across Tasmania, they are the equivalent of the UK's Royal National Lifeboat Institution, without the millions of dollars of funding and support. The recent tragic loss of two marine volunteers in Ballina as they went to rescue a yacht in distress has also highlighted the urgent need for the ongoing support and training for the MR volunteers. We have a situation where our VMR service has struggled to even afford the fuel for their boat, let alone the fuel for any training.

However, they are still awaiting the Premier's promised funding for VMRT of \$80,000 per unit, and, apparently, they have requested to be brought under the emergency services umbrella, but that's not eventuated. Can it be looked into, at least to deliver on the Premier's promise to fund their volunteer training and build them a storage shed and base for their rescue boat in the same way you might do for a local fire brigade?

Their rescue is on water, and I think they feel as though they are not receiving, perhaps, the support that they should for the service they provide and the service into the future.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Gaffney. Kind of, at a high level, you're right. VMR and Surf Life Saving Tasmania both sit under the sport portfolio currently.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Sport and rec. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - And they provide emergency services, both of them. There is, I suppose, a natural, kind of, working out where the best place is for those services to sit. I want to recognise

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the service of all the VMR crews and Surf Life Saving crews, and also pass on our condolences to our friends in New South Wales after the tragedy as well.

It can be really high-risk work. It's important that VMR fits in with the kind of broader marine policing capability because, obviously, Tasmania Police have highly specialised equipment, vessels and operators, and so getting that balance right is important. We work closely with them.

In terms of the funding, it might be something more that the Premier and minister Duigan can speak directly to at this stage. Certainly, we continue to work cooperatively with Surf and VMR. But I might pass over to the commissioner to talk through, I suppose, some of those arrangements.

**Comm ADAMS** - Through you, minister. Just a couple of additional comments. Tasmania Police is responsible, under the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements, for search and rescue. We are the lead agency for coordination of a search and rescue event.

Our search controllers will consider whether a VMR can provide support during a search, and they are also mindful of the capacity and limitations of some of the volunteer organisations. And as we bear responsibility for those that are, obviously, in support of a search and rescue event, we do exercise due diligence in terms of whether we engage them or not.

Like the minister, we are very grateful for the support that they do provide when we do utilise them in a search. Being a volunteer and giving up your time to contribute to broader community safety benefits is always lauded, and we thank them for what they do.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes. And to the VMR groups in other states' jurisdictions, are they under sport and recreation or are they under the police banners? I'm just wondering how they get their funding or how they are supported in the role they take, or take on, the roles they do. I'd be interested. If you don't have that information, I'd be quite happy for that to be looked into. I'm just interested to see.

**Comm ADAMS** - I'm not sure - sorry, minister, through you - that that would be something that we would do in terms of trying to do a jurisdictional analysis.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - No.

**Comm ADAMS** - It's not information that would be easy to obtain.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. I'll obtain that elsewhere. Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mr Hiscutt, a quick question?

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Can I just drill down a little bit, sorry. Because one of the parts of those questions was a discussion about bringing them under a control. Can we get any sort of commitment on a timeline to have that discussion finalised so at least a decision is made?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Discussions are ongoing. It's certainly been something that's been raised after the fatalities, particularly.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - It's been ongoing for a long time, I guess. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - And certainly, we work - I suppose, some VMRs are part of Surf, and Surf has also expressed an interest, viewing themselves as, kind of, a key part of emergency response. Particularly in that marine domain close to shore, but also now that they've developed swift water rescue capability that works really closely with us in flood events and those kinds of operations.

Obviously, we have, I suppose, the broader emergency management framework, and so we're all working together when there's an emergency. It just depends on, kind of, who might be their relevant minister. Those conversations are ongoing. Making sure that it's the right fit for everybody will be important, but -

**Mr HISCUTT** - But can you give some sort of, at least, within the next six months or 12 months we'll have come to a conclusion as to where that fits? Can you give us something concrete just so they're not - ongoing could mean years and years. Is there anything more concrete you can give to me than that?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. I don't have a sense of timeframe. I wouldn't imagine it would be something that we couldn't decide this year either way. Whether it does -

**Mr HISCUTT** - At least they get certainty is all I'm thinking. A decision.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. And either way, these bodies will continue to work really closely with Tasmania Police and DPFEM more broadly. There are some considerations, particularly for Surf. They have a really strong sporting culture as part of Surf, as well. That'll be something that we'll need to work through, but - yes. I imagine we can make a decision this year.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Hopefully this year. That'd be appreciated. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. And thank you very much for your team at the table.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - If we just take the time now to change to the State Fire Commission and if we stop the broadcast.

**The committee suspended from 12.16 p.m. to 12.18 p.m.**

## **State Fire Commission**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. And if you could introduce the new team at the table. Obviously we are now looking at the State Fire Commission.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. Obviously there have been some members who've been introduced, but also at the table are: Jeremy Smith, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner; Simon Pilkington, Acting Deputy Chief Officer, Operations; Andrea Heath, Executive Director, Strategy and Capability; and Mick Lowe, Executive Director, SES and Volunteers.

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**CHAIR** - Did you have a short overview that you'd like to make?

**Mr ELLIS** - That's okay. There's only 45 minutes, so I'm happy if we just get into it, Chair.

**CHAIR** - You're happy? Thank you. If I could just start with the questioning with regards to volunteers. Obviously, volunteers are a very important part of the State Fire Service. So, minister, what is the current number of volunteers, if you could maybe give me for the last three years? This year, I appreciate, we can only go up to a certain date, but the current number of volunteers in fire and emergency comparable to the last three years.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. So, we've got currently 4773 across TFS and SES, but I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk through if there's further data that we've got.

**Comm SMITH** - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister. Yes, and I'll briefly talk on the current numbers of volunteers within the TFS and SES. As of 26 March this year, we have 4030 TFS volunteers throughout our 230 brigades around the state. And once again, we really acknowledge the great work that they do, and they do every year for our organisation.

**CHAIR** - They do.

**Comm SMITH** - And for the SES it's approximately 750, of which, a number of those have grown in the north-west coast. We've done some recruitment there to bring additional numbers into the SES units in the north-west coast.

**CHAIR** - Are you able to advise over the last couple of years? If you haven't got it on hand, I'm more than happy to take it on notice. Because I was wondering too about Tasmania Fire Service. They terminated the memberships of 336 volunteers and that was in February 2026. I'm just wondering what we're actually doing to try and gain more volunteers.

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister, if that's okay. Certainly, unfortunately I did have to terminate approximately 330 volunteers earlier this year. That was due to a number of training requirements that weren't fulfilled to ensure that the TFS was a child and youth safe organisation.

There were two mandatory modules that were required to be completed by all staff and volunteers over the last 18 months and unfortunately during that 18-month period, for whatever reason, those volunteers, through numerous attempts to get them to finish those two modules, whether that was online, face-to-face, group training, et cetera, for whatever reason they did not want to engage. So, I had no choice, to ensure that our organisation is a child and youth safe organisation, but to terminate those individuals.

**CHAIR** - So, can you advise, the training modules, were they an onerous task? Were they over how many hours? These are volunteers, people who have obviously got work commitments as well as volunteering. I'm just wondering, it may not necessarily have been that they didn't wish to complete them, it might have just been whether they had the time to do them. The training modules, you say online and in person. Just give me an idea of the amount of time they might have taken.

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**Comm SMITH** - The feedback we received was that some people have completed those modules within 20 minutes and others up to an hour.

**CHAIR** - Right.

**Comm SMITH** - It was important to note that we went through numerous mechanisms to endeavour to engage with the volunteers, both from discussions at a local level all the way through to our traditional town halls reminding people that there are requirements to complete those modules. We did, yes, bespoke training with individuals.

We reached out, there were phone calls and, for whatever reason, and some of it was to - potentially they weren't available, they were interstate, they're on leave, et cetera. But we got to the stage over an 18-month period, unfortunately, we had to terminate those approximately 330 individuals.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. So you can provide the information that I mentioned previously?

**Comm SMITH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Did you have a question, Ms Webb?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, but I just put a lolly in my mouth.

**CHAIR** - I can ask another question or someone - yes. Mr Hiscutt. We'll come back to you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Following on that - and this is probably anecdotal - was it angst-driven, that process? Were people upset about the fact that they were terminated due to that, or was the majority of people who were not particularly active anyway and so just didn't complete the training and dropped off the list, I guess? Just anecdotally, how would you describe it?

**Comm SMITH** - Certainly, there were some individuals who were not happy with the process, didn't think they needed to do the mandatory training, and others just potentially used it as an excuse to step away from the brigade because they no longer wanted to -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. I see. 'Some', is that low digit, like sort of low tens, or is that sort of half of the 300 or so?

**Comm SMITH** - I don't have the exact figures.

**Mr HISCUTT** - No, no, no, no.

**Comm SMITH** - But yes, I would say, through you, minister, approximately 20 or so were feeling as though -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. The majority probably just dropped off, but there were some who were particularly upset and aggrieved by it?

**Comm SMITH** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - That's probably a broader point as well, Mr Hiscutt. With some mandatory training units that we've had in terms of the operation of the Tasmanian Government Radio Network, HAZMAT and now the child and youth safe training, we've sort of had a true-up of our volunteer numbers as well.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - The people who are actually really participating and willing to go through the training and work through it as part of the team. So, yes, we probably got a more accurate number of what our operational capability is over the last few years.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Hopefully that gave Ms Webb some time.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I finished the lolly. I shouldn't have said that on *Hansard*.

Minister, the State Planning Office reports that climate change is a serious and complex issue for Tasmania and its predicted effects include - quoting from them - longer fire seasons and more days of high fire danger and also an increase in extreme weather events.

So, the question I've got around that is: what modelling does the commission do to anticipate future impacts of longer fire seasons and extreme weather temperatures and events to ensure we've got sufficient resources when needed with those anticipated impacts?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. And that'll also include strategic flood mapping as well, but I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk through some of that.

**Comm SMITH** - Thank you for your question, and through you, minister. Climate change was identified as one of the key areas where our organisation needs to improve looking forward. It was identified in the operational review of the west coast fires back in 2024-25 as part of the AFAC independent review.

I have spoken with Natural Hazards Research Australia, and in fact I've got a meeting with them next week, to work through a program of works where we can identify what the state needs to do differently to ensure that we are better prepared, both from a fire point of view and obviously any other hazards that the TFS and SES may be responsible for.

There is a number of projects within Natural Hazards Research Australia that are currently being undertaken and we may be able to dovetail into that research and be more advanced quicker if we can access that research and then dovetail it in specifically to the west coast initially, the fires that are occurring there on a more regular basis and impacting thousands and tens of thousands of hectares on the west coast.

**Ms WEBB** - Absolutely. I had some questions, can I?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

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**Ms WEBB** - On the west coast review report that was done that you've just mentioned here, which is that AFAC Independent Operational Review, a review of the management of the 2025 Tasmania west coast fire complex. So, that report had 20 recommendations, I believe. Do you report against those recommendations in terms of what the response is or the implementation of the recommendations, where that's up to? Is that something that's publicly available?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. There is a group that oversees the recommendations called the Strategic Coordination Group, which is representatives from STT, Parks and myself. Those 20 recommendations are identified in a document where we keep up to date about the status of those, and every quarter we report through to the State Fire Commission. We've asked for an update to be provided in the next quarter.

**Ms WEBB** - And does that then get reported publicly in some way, like even in your annual report, if it's not on a more regular basis than that?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. Certainly, we could look at that to make it available.

**Ms WEBB** - There could be interest and usefulness in sharing the progress you're making on those recommendations. If you could consider reporting on it publicly in some way, that would be beneficial. Can I check on progress from a couple of those recommendations? We won't go to all 20, I'll just pick out a couple, if that's okay, Chair.

**CHAIR** - That's good. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - So, recommendation 1 was to have embedded within the State Operations Centre a Bureau of Meteorology meteorologist to ensure real-time expert meteorological support during emergency management incidents to improve situational awareness, decision-making and public safety. Has that one been progressed?

**Comm SMITH** - The current status is supported and that work has commenced. What that resource looks like is still being worked through. We may have to go out to a procurement process to identify a suitably skilled person or persons to make that capability available. It may not sit with the BOM.

**Ms WEBB** - We might get that elsewhere other than the BOM, but you're progressing the intent of that recommendation.

**Comm SMITH** - Yes. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Another one: recommendation 5 related to qualified TFS bushfire mitigation crews to support response being expanded. Is that something that's occurring?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister, if that's okay. Thank you again for the question. Currently, we're doing a review into the fuel reduction program and looking at what the resources currently are. That review is out for consultation, and I wouldn't want to pre-empt what comes back from the feedback, but certainly, we would be looking at better using the

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resources, because there are a number of very skilled people in that mitigation crew and fuel reduction unit, and we can potentially better use or better structure up to use them more effectively and efficiently.

**Ms WEBB** - Then, perhaps in relation to recommendation 17, have we formalised the Aboriginal liaison roles within incident management teams and provided appropriate training?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. This is a Parks and Wildlife or NRE-led body of work. What I can say is: it is supported, and it has commenced.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If I could just have a couple more questions with regard to the volunteers, and while I did ask for a list for the last three years of the number of volunteers, if you could also add onto that the number of career firefighters. You don't need to give that to me now. If that could be added to the question on notice.

I do notice that the volunteers, while they don't obviously receive money, do they get workers compensation? If they actually get injured while they're fighting a fire and they've got a job, rather than having to take sickness leave, is there workers compensation provided by Tas Fire Service for them? How does that work for them? Through you, minister.

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister, and thank you for the question. Certainly, volunteers are treated like any other member of the TFS. They access workers comp accordingly. I do have the number of career firefighters as of March this year, and it is 323.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Comm SMITH** - They're through Burnie, Devonport, Launceston and Hobart.

**CHAIR** - If I could have a breakdown of that, that would be really handy as well. As I said, I'm more than happy to receive, for the last three years, a question on notice. We'll provide you that written question, if I could.

I also notice that the volunteer firefighters have access to MyPulse, which is obviously the free health checkups. If a volunteer firefighter attends a fire, which is pretty awful and maybe something has happened in that situation, is there any mandatory - I know with police, obviously, if they attend a nasty fire accident - I think we sometimes forget that fire officers attend car accidents, which can be fairly stressful. Is there a mandatory part to the MyPulse that if they do come across something and you know that they've actually been to a nasty accident that they then have to go onto MyPulse or to one of these health checks to make sure that they're actually okay?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. Thank you for the question. Certainly, it's not mandatory for our volunteers and/or career staff unless they're undertaking specific roles, but certainly, after any incident or event that is traumatic, there is an after-action review and a peer debrief, and we're encouraging the reporting of individuals through to the wellbeing program and CISM.

**Mr ELLIS** - Critical incident stress management.

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**Comm SMITH** - Thank you. We also encourage the district staff or field staff or people responsible for the volunteers to ensure that they have better oversight after a tragic event.

**CHAIR** - Through you, minister. Do you believe it should be mandatory when they do come across a nasty accident, because many people probably wouldn't feel the need and think, 'No, I'm not going to do that. I don't need to do that', whereas it may be beneficial for them to do it? Do you consider that it should be mandatory after an awful incident or attending a very horrid car accident?

**Mr ELLIS** - When we have a fatality, the critical incident stress management process begins. In the fatalities that I've been to as a volunteer, that happens as a matter of course.

**CHAIR** - But you don't have to undertake it.

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. It's not compulsory, no.

**CHAIR** - I'm just thinking for the benefit of the actual person who's been to that scene.

**Mr ELLIS** - Broadly speaking, we take advice from our wellbeing support unit. We discussed in the previous hearings about the quality of that unit and the advice that they provide so that we're really getting a specialised risk management-based approach to these sorts of things. We'll continue to work with them on best advice and the way to approach these things.

**CHAIR** - My consideration is just for the volunteers. We know how important they are to support the career firefighters, and the fact that they have the cancers and the presumptive cancers have been included, most of them, haven't they, with the volunteers as well? You had a question?

**Ms WEBB** - I can keep going, if you like.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, the State Fire Management Council comprises 10 fire management areas, including the Hobart Fire Management Area Committee. I note that the website states Tasmania's most extreme fire weather events often occur within and in areas adjacent to the Hobart FMA. However, I did also note that the terms of reference document available for those fire management area committees is dated 2018, which is perhaps getting a little bit out of date.

My question is around, minister, given the changing patterns of longer fire seasons and extreme temperatures and recent fire activity that we've seen in areas that aren't Hobart-related, will there be a review of the terms of reference to ensure that the FMACs are in the best position to work with the community regarding current and anticipated shifting climate and fire environments?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. We don't have the State Fire Management Council Chair with us, but I might look to Commissioner Smith, with your involvement there, if you want to talk through it a bit more.

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**Comm SMITH** - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question. It's a responsibility for each fire management area committee to provide their annual report to the State Fire Management Council to be considered. That's normally done in September of each year, and that's then signed off by the State Fire Management Council.

I probably just want to add to that the risk associated with the interface around the Greater Hobart area, there is some strategic planning being undertaken with the key stakeholders, both from the Wellington Park Trust, Glenorchy City Council, Hobart City Council, and relevant other landowners such as Parks and Wildlife, and there's a little parcel of STT.

Those three strategic plans that are being reviewed currently will be potentially signed off within this month, and those fire management plans will be the basis of dealing with the risk on the Wellington Park Reserve going forward.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Did you say there was a timeline on that?

**Comm SMITH** - We believe the three plans will be signed off by the end of this month.

**Ms WEBB** - End of this month. Thank you.

**Comm SMITH** - There's a couple of stakeholders that need to be consulted.

**Ms WEBB** - Just back to the core part of my question, though, which also touched on the terms of reference here for the fire management area committee dating from 2018, are they to be reviewed? It says here 'to be reviewed every three years'. We're now, it would appear, eight years in. Is there going to be an update to review the terms of reference there?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. I'll have to take that on notice. The State Fire Management Council is separate.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you mind, if I put that through the question on notice, for you to direct it to the correct person?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If I could just add to one of my questions on notice, and we will put them in writing, when I ask for the numbers of volunteers and career firefighters, if I could just add gender as well, but we will write -

**Comm SMITH** - I can provide that detail right now. Through you, minister. As of the 323 career firefighters, 36, or just over 10 per cent, are female in the career firefighters. Volunteers, out of the 4030, approximately 20 per cent are females.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I will put it on notice for the three years. Thank you. Mr Hiscutt has a question.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you, minister. We learned a lot last year in GBEs with STT and their new technology for discovering fires. I just wondered if you could speak to see if there's

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been any advancements or just talk about how that relationship between the fire service and STT is progressing.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, that's right. Particularly AI-driven fire cameras has been a massive leap for us, the ability to detect fires in the landscape through artificial intelligence. They often pick the fires up before the human eye can, and obviously, often pick the fires up before the human eye can, and obviously, unlike people, they don't get tired, they don't need toilet breaks, they don't need to go and have lunch and all that sort of stuff. I know STT obviously aren't here at the table, but I know that they have just ticked over a million hectares now covered under surveillance from their AI fire cameras.

They're one of our three key fire agencies - obviously Parks, STT and TFS - and we work really closely together to have that interoperable information-sharing so that we can have a quick response, a rapid rate of attack and get on top of fire starts as quick as we can. But I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk more, I suppose, about some of those arrangements, and maybe some broader technology operations, too.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Just the, yes, emerging technologies, yes.

**Comm SMITH** - Thank you, minister, and thank you for the question. Through you, minister. Yes, certainly the capability of STT in our integrated fire detection system within the state has proved invaluable, not only in detecting fires but making sure that those fires are actual fires so we don't have unnecessary callouts, especially for our volunteers or agency staff. We're finding that is extremely beneficial.

We're also finding that we're able to monitor and track fire progression at all hours of the day and night so we can determine how far, potentially, some fires have moved in the landscape over a period of time when we don't actually have eyes on the fire as well. From an operational tool and a detection tool, we're seeing this new technology invaluable.

It also will build, or we will be building, on our drone capability within the TFS to do some more mapping and detection of fires where we don't need to use aircraft, so it'll be cheaper, et cetera. The use of technology is going to be beneficial for us going forward.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I'll be interested to see next year when we ask the question to see what amazing new technology is being used for.

**Mr ELLIS** - We actually have a - and this is not necessarily TFS-related - but an amazing Tasmanian company who are just about to take part in an international fire competition, and I think I have this right in saying that Indicium Dynamics, they're going to Alaska, and the idea of the challenge is you need to be able to detect from space a fire start within 10 minutes and autonomously send a drone to put it out within that timeframe. It's fascinating what some of the new technologies emerging are.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Pretty exciting stuff.

**Mr ELLIS** - Whether we'll be able to roll that out next year, I probably wouldn't say necessarily. But, you know, as much as we're facing a future of more frequent and more severe natural disasters, we're also going to be entering a future where there's new capability that's going to be brought online that I think is really encouraging as well.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - You can have one of those drones at every lake around Tasmania ready to - any time it happens, yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Getting on it early is obviously the main thing, isn't it?

**Mr ELLIS** - That's right. Rapid rate of attack, so - yes, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Minister, if I could just ask you, with regard to the Budget, the Budget identifies the fleet replacement program as a major key deliverable in 2026-27. Can you provide a detailed timetable for appliance replacement this year and across the forward Estimates and explain how operational readiness is being maintained while the ageing vehicles remain in service?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. We've just had a really exciting milestone with this with the first of our new urban pumpers being rolled out at Kingston Fire Brigade and now going to be around the state in a range of really key locations, so there'll be about 15 of those new vehicles coming through. But I'll pass over to the commissioner to talk more about that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Comm SMITH** - Thank you, minister. I might throw to our acting deputy chief, Simon Pilkington, who's responsible for the fleet for the TFS.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr PILKINGTON** - Thank you, commissioner, and through you, minister. We do have a strategic asset management plan in place for our fleet. We've recently introduced the new medium pumper, as the minister said. We also have new heavy pumper vehicles inbound as well as tender processes starting on hazardous materials, aerials and also medium tankers. We'll continue to replace the vehicles through the age profile in that strategic asset management plan as we progress.

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Pilkington, 'aerials' in this context, maybe just for members who might be thinking of aircraft.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr PILKINGTON** - Yes, sorry. Through you, minister. An aerial appliance is a ladder appliance. In Hobart specifically we have a couple of premises that rely on that appliance for evacuation. They're quite an expensive appliance, and we'll be progressing that tender process shortly.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Through you, minister, what age would vehicles get replaced? Is there a certain age or is there a certain mileage? How do you determine when all of a sudden it's reached its use-by date, or is it the fact simply that new vehicles come out with better equipment, or is it the combination of everything?

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**Mr PILKINGTON** - Through you, minister. We have an internal target of 25 years. We're working hard to try and maintain that. There are vehicles within the fleet that exceed that age. A lot of those are specialist appliances that have low use, so, yes, as we reach that target age, we try and implement them and orientate our build program around the age of those vehicles.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Can go for another one? I know the Chair was asking questions earlier about volunteers and support if they've been exposed to distressing scenes. Is there a policy around your younger volunteers and whether they're present at those sorts of scenes and how you deal with that? Do you have arrangements for volunteers who are, say, under 18 and involved in those activities?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. The age for response for our volunteers is 18 and above.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Comm SMITH** - We know that the traumatic events that our people do see can be exacerbated if they're younger than 18, and then currently, yes, the response is 18.

**Ms WEBB** - How long has that policy been in place?

**Comm SMITH** - I'd have to take that on notice.

**Ms WEBB** - So, a while, by the sound of it, or is it a recent -

**Comm SMITH** - Yes. We've got a juvenile and cadet program where we did have some live fire training that we stopped because it is actually putting those people at a psychological risk by exposing them to the fires.

**Ms WEBB** - It's an interesting conundrum, isn't it, because in another way, having people involved when they're young gives you a pipeline of people to come through into adulthood and continue as volunteers, so how are you tackling that potential difficulty of protecting young people and not putting them in inappropriate situations, but also providing an entry point for young people into the volunteer service?

**Comm SMITH** - There are approximately about 40 brigades around the state that have a juvenile cadet program, and they're supported by specialist people within the brigades to ensure that they're looked after appropriately. We are doing some research into seeing how many juveniles or cadets that come through those programs actually become active senior members. We believe those numbers are approximately 12 per cent.

So they may not go straight from being a cadet to a juvenile into being a senior member, but at some stage they may come back through to a brigade, whether it's the one they initially started at or another one around the state. But we do some work in that space about determining the effectiveness and efficiency of having a program and making sure that we're obviously keeping them in a safe space, noting that, yes, mandatory training and ensuring people are -

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**Ms WEBB** - Yes, you've got to have the right, safe environment for them to be in. Do you set targets for attracting participants into the volunteer cadets and juvenile programs?

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. It's really led locally. Certainly, we've got resources in our volunteer support unit that can provide additional support to brigades to run those programs. So, it's not a tailored number by any means, it's more if people want to participate, then we'd look at running those programs in those brigades.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Mr ELLIS** - Definitely one, Ms Webb, too, if you are interested, the competitions that we have, either statewide or local, are really great to go along to, because there's a lot of junior members. That's where they get their training.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, they're doing it in a simulated environment where there's not fire or fatalities and those kinds of things, but they get very sharp. And you can often tell volunteer firefighters who have been a junior, because they are very good on their operational skills.

**Ms WEBB** - Great.

**CHAIR** - Is that where you started, minister?

**Mr ELLIS** - Definitely not, as people who have seen me bowl a hose will know. There are plenty of better volunteers at Sassafra than me, and particularly because of going through the junior program. So, yes, it's a really worthwhile thing, as the commissioner mentioned. We don't always necessarily get them going - you know, they turn 18 and they become a firefighter straightaway. Life gets in the way, but they often come back.

**Ms WEBB** - You've planted a seed.

**Mr ELLIS** - They've got real good muscle memory for some of these things, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - It's interesting to hear that figure of, you know, 12 per cent potentially end up into the adult volunteer space. Looking at it from the other perspective, have you got a sense of how many of your current adult volunteers began by being junior volunteers, so you sort of have a sense of how significant a pathway it has historically been?

**Comm SMITH** - If the question is how many seniors were juniors, I think it's that 12 per cent.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Okay. Sorry, I thought when you were providing that data you meant of the juniors who currently or have recently done juvenile or cadet programs, 12 per cent of them come through to be adults. But you were -

**Comm SMITH** - I was alluding to you there.

**Ms WEBB** - The count.

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**Comm SMITH** - Say, 100 junior cadet participants, 12 per cent of those will become senior.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Comm SMITH** - And I might just throw to the volunteer executive director just to confirm that or provide any other detail.

**Mr LOWE** - Yes. So the there's -

**Ms WEBB** - Do you understand the opposite way I was asking you - of your adult cohort, how many of them - like what percentage of them were juniors first?

**Mr LOWE** - Yes. So, at the moment, of the adult cohort of volunteers, around 12 per cent have been previously juniors.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Mr LOWE** - So, it's not a program that automatically passes through to the adult ranks, but what we see is people who are then predisposed to being a volunteer later in life. So, that's where it becomes quite effective.

**Ms WEBB** - All good. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no questions from the other members, I'll just ask a question about the Fire Station Build Program. And I noticed that the Volunteer Infrastructure Investment Fund, which is the dedicated - well, my understanding is the dedicated funding program for upgrading infrastructure.

The Budget identifies the Fire Station Build Program as an ongoing key deliverable, but it also notes the time-limited funding associated with the Volunteer Infrastructure Investment Fund, which is going to conclude. So, what station, brigade and SES facility projects remain outstanding, particularly for volunteers, and how will those needs be funded once that dedicated volunteer infrastructure funding has ended? So do we still have things that we don't have money for that we need to find money for?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. And I'll pass it over to the team, but can I just pay a big tribute to our team that have been running the Volunteer Infrastructure Investment Fund.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - This has been an outstanding program and it's upgraded facilities in every corner of Tasmania. Places that haven't had work on them for yonks and yonks that have now more accessible bathroom facilities, a bit of PPC separation, more functional response areas.

**CHAIR** - It's safer for our fighters.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, exactly. So, it's been an excellent program and it's also expanded into a few other areas. But I'll pass over to the team from TFS to talk more through around the program.

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**Comm SMITH** - Thanks, minister, and through you. Certainly, the State Fire Commission is investing heavily in infrastructure. We're currently having a construction of a firefighting facility at Bridport as part of the plan to upgrade the facilities in that growing area.

That follows investment into Campbell Town and Marrawah over the last couple of years. And part of the State Fire Commission's commitment and the moneys brought from government into the VIIF is that we're focusing on separation of PPC and individuals into clean and dirty areas within fire stations especially, because it's important that we keep those hazards separate and making sure that, again, we're keeping our firefighters safe.

Ongoing from that, we're certainly looking at the contributions from the state government in and around Wynyard, Kingston and Rosebery as far as the next potential builds for -

**CHAIR** - The next stage?

**Comm SMITH** - Yes, for SES and/or TFS in those locations.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. And Mr Hiscutt has a question.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, thank you. Just noticing the final year of funding for the Respect 360 program. Just wondering if you could indicate how that project has gone, what it's achieved and, I guess, what into the future happens with the funding no longer there.

**Comm SMITH** - Through you, minister. Certainly the State Fire Commission has invested heavily into Respect 360. Right from 2004 when we engaged with EB&Co to undertake the review into the culture of TFS, and subsequently SES were involved in it.

**Mr ELLIS** - 2024. Yes.

**Comm SMITH** - From 2024, sorry.

**Mr HISCUTT** - That's a long review.

**Comm SMITH** - 2024. Yes, those recommendations have been supported, and we've been working through a number of those. Some of those are not obvious. There's been a lot of work done in the policy and process for complaints and grievances to ensure when people do report, that we actually manage those grievances appropriately.

And there has been a lot of work done by both the department and our people in making sure those policies and procedures are embedded. We've also done a listening tour where the senior executive moved around the state to a number of work areas and brigades and units to get feedback firsthand and what they would like to progress.

We have done some further work with work areas, and leadership certainly comes out as one of the main areas of focus that we need to move forward. The commission has identified a body of money for this upcoming financial year, and as the program of work rolls out, because this will be almost like a generational change for our organisation, they'll commit moneys to the programs that are identified as the program works are determined.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - So, those new committed moneys, will they just come out of the current operating or will you be seeking further investment to achieve those results? I'm just making sure there's enough there to make sure that all the good work we've done so far doesn't stop because the budget stops at 2026-27.

**Comm SMITH** - And through you, minister. Certainly the State Fire Commission is committed to providing sufficient funding for the program of works. One of the things we want to do with the whole Respect 360 is to get it into business as usual as soon as possible.

So, where we have our training for leadership, if there are certain areas that we just need to identify as a bit of an uplift, certainly, it's not a whole new training program. It'll be just a bespoke part of that training that just provides that level of detail to the individual undertaking those courses.

The other aspect to that is that we don't want to reinvent the wheel, either. Our volunteers especially bring a lot of skills and capacity and capabilities to the job role. We want to make sure that we recognise that formally so they don't have to go back and do all this work. It's just a tailored component, maybe, but as I allude to, we want to make it a business as usual as soon as possible.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Appreciate the response. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Do we have any burning questions? No pun intended.

**Mr ELLIS** - We've been flooded with them.

**Ms WEBB** - If I may, while we've still got the minister, Chair - while we've still got the minister, I do have a follow-up and it's not State Fire, it's going back to before with Tas Police, but it was on the table that was provided about family violence incidents involving firearms as a weapon and it was tabled here with us.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Perhaps ask the - we don't need anyone to come to the table for that?

**Ms WEBB** - No, no, that's all right.

**CHAIR** - No.

**Ms WEBB** - No, I'm just going to ask the minister. Would you mind, minister, because that didn't have the extra information I asked for, which was about registered or unregistered, in terms of whether we knew that about the data. Do you mind if I put through a further question about clarifying that?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, happy to, and I think there may have been an issue with not collecting that particular dataset, but I'm happy to take it on notice and we can follow up for you.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. You may be getting a steer on that from -

**A witness** - You're correct, minister. We don't record that.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

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**Ms WEBB** - It's not recorded so I can't ask for it. I won't ask for it then.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. No, that's good.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I just wanted to clarify. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. And minister, we'd really like to thank all the people you've had at the table and obviously emergency - police, fire and emergency management is so important. On behalf of the community, basically, and the members of our team, we really thank very much all the people here today and obviously all the police officers and firies, volunteers and career, right across the state, because without you I don't know actually what we'd do and it's absolutely fabulous. So, thanks so much on behalf of the team and on behalf of the community. Really appreciate it, and appreciate you taking the time to come in as well. Thank you very much.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - And minister, we will return at 2 p.m. with Minister for Skills and Jobs and TasTAFE. And if we could stop the broadcast, please.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. Fifty years of SES coming up -

**The committee suspended from 12.56 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.**

### TasTAFE

**CHAIR** - Welcome back, minister, to this afternoon's session, and we will commence with TasTAFE. If you would like to introduce your team at the table and perhaps make a short overview before we go to questions.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. At the table here we've got Tim Gardner, TasTAFE Board Chair; Dr Norman Baker, TasTAFE CEO; not yet Will McShane, but if needed, Chief Financial Officer; and, of course, Alex Paterson, director - general manager?

**Ms PATERSON** - General Manager.

**Mr ELLIS** - General Manager, Skills Tasmania, in case there's any skills crossover. Then, of course, Adam Foster, my Chief of Staff, who won't be taking questions.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Did you want to make a short overview?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, if that works, Chair. Our government makes the largest recurrent investment in economic development through the Skills and Jobs portfolio. This is about building the workforce we need today and preparing for the opportunities of tomorrow. The Tasmanian Skills Plan sets a clear direction, puts the learner at the centre of the VET system and guides our investment.

The central theme is skills for jobs. We prioritise funding for training that leads to employment outcomes, focusing on skills and shortage and those demanded by employers. We

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continue to invest in TasTAFE, with expenditure increasing from \$149.4 million in 2025-26 to more than \$153.2 million in 2026-27 and remaining above this level over the forward Estimates.

The Tasmanian government continues to make significant investments in TasTAFE to ensure that students and employers have access to modern industry-aligned training facilities that support the workforce needs of the future.

Key investments include \$27.2 million for the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence in the north-west supporting expanded renewable energy electro-technology and clean energy training infrastructure, including student accommodation to support regional deliverable; \$7.5 million into the Alanvale health and community services expansion in Launceston, increasing training capacity for health, youth work and community services students in northern Tasmania; \$20 million for the student management system supporting a modern digital platform to improve the student experience, strengthen enrolments and administration processes and provide more efficient support for staff and put learners at the centre; \$2.35 million for the new southern Tasmania automotive training facility, delivering a modern replacement training facility for automotive apprentices and students, ensuring industry standard training environments and equipment for the sector's future workforce needs.

Through this investment in new and upgraded facilities at campuses around Tasmania, the government is continuing to ensure that training in TasTAFE remains accessible for students, including in regional areas. Thanks for the opportunity to assist the committee with these questions.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, and our first question is from Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair. There's just some general questions I've been asking each of the departments that comes before us, and I think it's probably also relevant to ask TasTAFE as well. I'm just tracking through and asking people about use of external consultancies into your area. Are you able to provide us with, if you have utilised any external consultancies or are currently in this year utilising any external consultancies for projects, a breakdown of those and their costs?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass over to the team from TasTAFE.

**Dr BAKER** - Thanks, minister. Yes, we do use consultancies. I don't have the value of that in front of me, but I can talk around a range of consultancies around our student management system, specialist financial support, specialist HR support in terms of recruiting.

**Mr ELLIS** - I don't think we've got specifics here in terms of -

**Ms WEBB** - Could we send it through to you as a question on notice?

**Mr ELLIS** - but you can take it on notice, if that's okay.

**Ms WEBB** - Great. In terms of looking ahead, then, around that area of use of external consultancies, mindful of operational efficiencies that are being brought through in this Budget, are you anticipating that that's an area that will be impacted by decisions around making operational efficiencies?

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**Mr GARDNER** - Thank you. No, I don't. We wouldn't be looking towards shifting costs from our organisation into consultancies, so we'd be very careful around that.

**Ms WEBB** - You're not anticipating you'll either have to reduce your use of external consultancies as part of operational efficiencies?

**Dr BAKER** - Sorry, I am looking to reduce, I'm not looking to shift costs into consultancies, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - You are looking to reduce. Appreciate it. Okay. Thank you. I understand and appreciate that.

You do have a significant, I think, digital infrastructure project underway. It's, of course, an area of interest at the moment around management of digital infrastructure projects within departments, because there's been some auditor-general reports in some government departments that have shown some problems around project-managing those sorts of things, so I'm interested to hear in a general sense.

I think in the budget papers we see your student management system replacement, which I suspect would come into this category of digital infrastructure. I'd also like to hear about any other digital infrastructure projects that you have underway, and I'm keen to hear about how they are tracking specifically in terms of delivery on timelines and on budget. Can you give us some outlines of those? Thank you.

**Dr BAKER** - Sure. Thank you. The student management system replacement is the largest digital infrastructure project that we have underway. It's an approximately \$24 million project over the life of three years, and that covers everything from planning, licensing, implementation, data migration, systems integration and also a significant component there for change management. The licence fee for that new system is about \$1.1 million per year, and that will be an ongoing fee for our organisation.

We do believe that the student management system will bring significant benefits to our learners, industry and staff. It is the core system for our organisation, so I'm really pleased that government is investing in a new fit-for-purpose student management system. So, in terms of where we're at with the project, we're just moving through now into UAT, user acceptance testing. Early signs are that there will be some more functions that we'll need to test, and we'll probably go into a second round of user acceptance testing. We're looking for a phased implementation of different functionality in the student management system over the next year, with a full implementation from around about 2027.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Is that the timeline that was there at the beginning of this project when it was first begun or have we pushed that timeline out during the progress of it?

**Dr BAKER** - I'd have to take that under advisement, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - When did the project start, maybe?

**Mr GARDNER** - We're halfway through. We're scheduled to be prepared, ready for 2027 implementation, and that's what we're working to.

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**Ms WEBB** - So, it began in 2025?

**Mr GARDNER** - 2025, I think that's right.

**Ms WEBB** - Was the \$24 million the original budgeted amount for the project?

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes. Yes. Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Are we on track to deliver the project within that budget?

**Dr BAKER** - Absolutely. At this stage we're travelling really, really well on the budget.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Are there any other digital infrastructure projects that you can mention to us in addition to that?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes. There's been a few investments in wi-fi across our campuses, so we're improving the wi-fi access across all of our larger campuses, and in addition, investments in student laptop banks, which has been greatly received by our students.

**Ms WEBB** - I bet. Are they new projects or are they ones that are completed or underway still?

**Dr BAKER** - The wi-fi is still underway, still installing those wi-fi access points across a couple of campuses. The laptop banks now are really an ongoing project. As our demand increases or consumer demand shifts at different campuses, we'll move the laptops to those campuses.

**Ms WEBB** - In terms of the wi-fi access projects, the budgets for those projects and then their delivery, did they line up? Did we deliver those on budget, or how did we track?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, I understand we have, yes, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Ms Webb, probably the other one is a major IT upgrade within our broader skills system, so we can either cover that now or we can do that in the next one, if you want.

**Ms WEBB** - We can talk about it in the next one. Let's do it in the next line item, if that's okay, minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - Great. Perfect.

**Ms WEBB** - You help me remember if I forget.

**Mr ELLIS** - No, that's all good.

**Ms WEBB** - Just to keep it nice and separate in the transcripts.

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Then, does TasTAFE have any Closing the Gap projects or goals or responsibilities under our action plan for Closing the Gap progress?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, we do.

**Ms WEBB** - Can you give us an update on what they are and what's occurring within those?

**Dr BAKER** - We have a range of resources in our organisation to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We've had about 847 enrolments from Aboriginal people that are self-disclosed; we actually think it's probably at least another 25 per cent more, but in those self-disclosed areas.

We've got a Gumnuts to Buttons project that we deliver. That's essentially a history of Aboriginal and First Nations peoples' experiences here in Tasmania. That's delivered to all of our staff as well as to students who self-enrol in that, and it is a requirement in some of our community services courses, where those staff members and their students will be working in organisations that have predominantly large Aboriginal/First Nations peoples participating. Specifically from the Closing the Gap funding, we've got the Aboriginal vocational pathways pilot program, which so far is going really, really well. It's only just opened a couple of weeks ago.

**Ms WEBB** - That's a new program?

**Dr BAKER** - It's a new program, yes. It's taken some time to bring that about. It's a comprehensive two-part program which provides a whole lot of foundational skills for learners, and then we move them into vocational programs, as well as significant job placement programs, so looking forward to that.

**Ms WEBB** - Is that done in conjunction with any Tasmanian Aboriginal controlled organisations, or how do you deliver that?

**Mr ELLIS** - We do have some broader work in the Skills portfolio around work with ACCOs, so I'm happy to come back on that.

**Ms WEBB** - Might come back to that, too. I'd better write these notes down to remind myself. It's just an internally delivered program; it's not in conjunction with Aboriginal controlled organisations?

**Mr GARDNER** - If I may, as I understand it, we have Aboriginal leadership within the organisation, staff with connections to various Aboriginal organisations. They're connected, and they effectively lead and deliver internally within the organisation.

**Ms WEBB** - Great. Good to understand. In terms of that project that's just begun, is there a particular life cycle for that project, or will it be an ongoing project you deliver within TasTAFE?

**Dr BAKER** - It's a two-year pilot, and we'll consider the effectiveness of that pilot somewhere towards the end of that pilot, and then we'll look to continue it if it's successful.

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**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Excellent. Let's hope that's the case. Any other Closing the Gap areas to mention?

**Dr BAKER** - Just that cultural competency training that I referred to.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I can move on to other areas now. Is that okay, or do you want to start with someone else?

**CHAIR** - Does anyone else have any questions in this area?

**Mr HISCUTT** - We're just in overview the whole time, aren't we? Go for your life.

**Ms WEBB** - Just through to some more nuts-and-bolts-type questions, I suppose: how many unfilled TasTAFE teacher vacancies currently exist, and in what course areas?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. Happy to pass over to the team from TasTAFE.

**Dr BAKER** - We'd have to get a breakdown on those vacancies.

**Ms WEBB** - You'll be able to give us a breakdown if we send it through on notice?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Just while I think of it, Ms Webb, I have also one to table on notice: the MyPulse activities since program inception for this hearing.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. What's the total FTE of TasTAFE teachers employed for, say, May 2024, May 2025, and May 2026? Can you give us some figures on that and include maybe a gender breakdown of those TasTAFE employees?

**Dr BAKER** - If I can go to the gender first, 52 per cent of our staff are female, and 48 per cent are male. For the 12 months to March 26, we had a decrease of 40 FTE and 44 headcount at March 2025.

**Ms WEBB** - What I'm interested to get is the figures for May 2024, May 2025, May 2026 or a relevant similar date, and then the gender breakdown in each of those years.

**Dr BAKER** - At March 2026, TasTAFE, 808 FTE. Headcount was 899. I don't have the breakdown specifically of those years, just the current breakdown, which is that 52:48 number that I referred to earlier.

**Ms WEBB** - There was 52 per cent male, 48 per cent female?

**Dr BAKER** - Other way around: 52 female.

**Ms WEBB** - Other way around. That was 2026.

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**Dr BAKER** - That's correct.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you have the previous two years?

**Mr GARDNER** - Just the previous year on headcount, March 2025.

**Ms WEBB** - I'll take that for now.

**Dr BAKER** - So, for 2025, 848.

**Ms WEBB** - FTEs?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, FTE.

**Ms WEBB** - Headcount?

**Dr BAKER** - Headcount: 943.

**Ms WEBB** - What was the gender breakdown for that year?

**Dr BAKER** - I don't have that. I'll have to get back to you.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you mind if I put a question through just to fill that dataset out? Thank you, minister. I'll send that through after. I appreciate that.

**Mr GARDNER** - We actually have, if I may, for March 2025: 53 per cent female, 47 per cent male.

**Ms WEBB** - If I send something through, can I get the prior year potentially for those as well that you haven't got with you today?

**Mr GARDNER** - We've only got 2025-26 figures, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Then in terms of the number of employees who since May 2024, across those three years, have exited.

**Mr GARDNER** - We'd have to take that on notice. We haven't got the figures.

**Dr BAKER** - We've got March 2025 turnover rate of about 12 per cent but don't have previous years.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'd rather see some numbers. If I can send that through as a question on notice, that would be great. Do you want to go to anybody else, Chair, and then come back to me?

**CHAIR** - Mr Edmunds.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I can go. While we're in overview, minister, were you a member of Cabinet at the time that the decision was made to allow Madeleine Ogilvie to use public money on her legal fees?

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**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks for the question, Mr Edmunds. You wouldn't expect me to talk about Cabinet, but I think the Premier's responded on behalf of the government sufficiently already.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Minister, were you aware that Madeleine Ogilvie was party to a Supreme Court matter prior to 17 November 2025, and if not, when were you aware?

**Mr ELLIS** - I think the Premier's responded on behalf of the government on this one already.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - When did you become aware, minister, of the false statement Madeleine Ogilvie made to parliament last year regarding her legal matter?

**Mr ELLIS** - I've got nothing further to add, Mr Edmunds. The Premier's already responded on behalf of the government.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Did you know Ms Ogilvie's answer was false at the time she gave it, and if so, why didn't you act to ensure the record was corrected?

**Mr ELLIS** - I've got nothing further to add, Mr Edmunds. Obviously, the Premier's responded on behalf of the government.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Just one more: given you were a member of Cabinet when Madeleine Ogilvie's legal fees were approved, did you, or why didn't you, tell her to correct the record after you witnessed her lying to parliament?

**Mr ELLIS** - You wouldn't expect me to talk about Cabinet. The Premier's responded on behalf of the government.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any questions with regard to TasTAFE?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I just thought I'd get those in at the moment.

**CHAIR** - That's understandable. I understand, but do you have any questions now you'd like to -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, but I know others are -

**CHAIR** - We'll go to Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I've just got a quick, short one. Thank you. This in relation to budget book 4, page 83, where it talks Skills, Training and Workforce Growth. It has our apprentices and trainees in training actual for 2023-24 at 11,000; the 2024-25 actual at 9700, a significant drop; and then the target across 2025-26 and 2026-27 dropping further again, and a note made there that it's due to the COVID training incentives closing. Considering what we have planned for the state in relation to the stadium, Marinus and other projects, a huge pipeline of works, is that a concern, and how are we addressing that concern?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Hiscutt. That's in the broader Skills side of things. I'll pass to Ms Paterson shortly. Broadly speaking, we saw a huge increase of apprentices in training

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commencing training during COVID, particularly the incentives of the federal government at the time. Now, those incentives have been largely taken away across the country. We've seen a stabilising of apprentice numbers. That's been similar in Tasmania.

What this has meant is that we're getting a huge number of completions coming through at the moment, and in Tasmania, we've got among the highest completion rates in the country. A lot of those apprentices are now becoming tradespeople, which is good, and that's bolstered our workforce capacity, but certainly, there's more work that needs to be done. I'll pass over to Ms Paterson to add further.

**Ms PATERSON** - Thank you, minister. Through you. We are seeing strong results and completions, as the minister mentioned. There were 3835 apprentice and trainee completions in the year to 30 September 2025, which is up 15.5 per cent on a year earlier and 26.1 per cent over five years.

Trade completions, which is obviously really important in terms of delivering the workforce that we need for that construction effort, is up 17.7 per cent over the last 12 months. Certainly, there is a national softening of completion numbers, but Tasmania's still doing very well nationally, but there's obviously always more we can do.

**Mr HISCUTT** - There's that concern of it dipping into the next four years, if that's the wave it's riding, and I thought the question was in TasTAFE because they're training a lot of those apprentices. That's why I asked it there, but yes, certainly a concern, considering what we've got ahead of us hopefully in this state. Happy to throw, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Mr Gaffney.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, just with the TasTAFE, I saw the explanation of major variations and the increase in proceeds from the disposal of non-financial assets in 2026-27 - sale of excess land at the Devonport campus and a childcare centre in Launceston. Have we got a value on that - on both of those pieces of land and what they are intended to be used for?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, so with that, we actually have a number of childcare assets around the state that are no longer being used for teaching. And so we've already been working through a process to sell those childcare assets to the childcare operators who run them, which is a good outcome for families and also for TAFE as well.

The land will be a bit more difficult to quantify as we work through because there may be opportunities to rezone and things like that as we work through. But I'll pass over to the team from TasTAFE to talk through further.

**Dr BAKER** - Thank you. So, the childcare centre in Devonport, Malangenna - I think it's pronounced - we're just about finishing the process of the proceeds of sale for that. So, that should be completed, the sale of that, at any time now. The actual value, from memory, was somewhere in the position of \$900,000, but I'd have to get the exact figure for you.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Chair.

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**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Sorry, through you. I'll just declare an interest that I am on the board of Devonport Childcare Centre.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr HISCUTT** - So, that's not managed but just wanted to declare that.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And my question through to the minister: have you identified other parcels of land throughout the state to be sold at certain - and how is that process done? Is it put out for tender or does it depend on the land? I'm just interested in the process.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. It'll be something that we'll need to work through. The Devonport TAFE facility is surrounded by a huge amount of land, as you know well, Mr Gaffney. Burnie also has quite a bit of land as well. But I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE to talk through some of that asset stuff.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, indeed. Just recently we've been in conversations with Homes Tas CEO, Ben. They are interested in developing some social housing on land at the back of the Devonport campus that hasn't been used since its opening in 1969. So, we'll progress conversations with Homes Tas around that, but early days.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. And my last question is, the TAFE that you have set up, if there is extra land, how do you balance that against potentially extra requirements you might need to use in the future if you want to build something? I mean, what process is used for that?

**Mr ELLIS** - Something that we work through, but I'll pass that on.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes. So, we've recently completed a 10-year infrastructure plan. And so it sets out kind of a future for our infrastructure and makes sure that it's fit for purpose, contemporary for years to come and includes space for growth. So, we'll be guided by our infrastructure plan and community input.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. And in that infrastructure plan, who has had input into that? Is it just within the TAFE or do you go out to other industry or other council areas? Who do you speak to and consult with?

**Mr GARDNER** - So, there was a process. When the plan was being drafted, the first phase of that was a consultation piece that was undertaken by the consultants who developed the plan, and that was, within each region we undertook a consultative process to understand the needs for that region. So, that was talking to local government, talking to industry, industry bodies, and those key stakeholders within various regions to understand what demand was looking like over time. So, that process was undertaken to inform our internal thinking.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. And could you just give me an upshot on the west coast TAFE? Is it still going in Queenstown?

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**Mr GARDNER** - It sold.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It sold.

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And so the students from there -

**Mr GARDNER** - No students.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - No students at all?

**Mr GARDNER** - Been no students for a long time.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**Dr BAKER** - It's the 10 Hunter Street site.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So that's all sold.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Mr GARDNER** - Sold to the Abt Railway Corporation.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Yes, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - And a follow-up from this, because I had a few in that sort of area as well around sales. That 10-year infrastructure plan, is that a public document?

**Mr GARDNER** - No.

**Ms WEBB** - It's just an internal document?

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. And is there anything you share publicly, say, in your annual report, that even provides some sort of precis of it or some sort of summary like that? Would that be in your previous annual report or is it in the upcoming, the next annual report?

**Mr GARDNER** - I would have thought it's in the previous annual report.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. Okay. Thank you.

**Mr GARDNER** - Off the top of my head. Yes.

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**Ms WEBB** - So, in the last year, is there any - can you just detail out, in case we've missed any - sales of land or facilities in the last year?

**Mr GARDNER** - Nothing further than what's been talked about. So there's the Devonport Childcare Centre and the Queenstown - the unused Queenstown one.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Dr BAKER** - Just those two.

**Mr GARDNER** - That's those two.

**Ms WEBB** - And then in terms of our facilities, are we doing - not selling facilities - but potentially, are we subletting any facilities to any other, say, providers or any other - for any other purposes, to external organisations?

**Mr GARDNER** - If I may. The only one that I'm aware of is there is a sublease to the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone on our Alanvale campus for them to undertake training within that, to utilise the space on our campus for training.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Right.

**Mr GARDNER** - And the arrangement there is that we've got joint access to use those facilities for TasTAFE as well.

**Ms WEBB** - The training that they deliver there, is that training that TasTAFE used to deliver there?

**Mr GARDNER** - No.

**Ms WEBB** - Or is it separate?

**Mr GARDNER** - No, it's additional.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Are there any further plans then, looking ahead into this next financial year, for TasTAFE to do any subletting or arrangements like that for other organisations to utilise facilities?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, I think it would be fair to say it's part of our plan that where we have any underutilised resources or facilities across the state that we would look to partner with like-minded and complementary businesses that support our business to allow them to have access to our facilities. We also have day hire rates as well, so organisations and individual associations might rent a boardroom or meeting rooms and computer rooms.

**Ms WEBB** - Use the meeting rooms or something. Yes. Those instances aside, not the small meeting room hires, but in terms of subletting our facilities or providing our facilities for use for other providers or purposes, are there any major ones of those in the upcoming year as we look ahead that you can identify?

**Dr BAKER** - Not yet, no.

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**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Just that we're potentially open to it if it comes up.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, that's correct. Yes.

**Mr GARDNER** - The only other project, I think, at this stage that's on the cards - it's under development at the moment - is the Clean Energy Centre of Excellence.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Okay. So, that's mentioned in the budget papers.

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Would you like to speak about that and how that works into our facilities?

**Mr GARDNER** - Just that part of that model is to allow third-party providers to come into that space and to deliver within that space, so partner with other organisations, as Norm said, to assist in the delivery of the training for the clean energy industry.

**Ms WEBB** - So, just break down what 'partner' means: as in it's going to be based in TasTAFE physical facilities?

**Dr BAKER** - In the Burnie campus. Yes, that's right.

**Ms WEBB** - So, we offer our facilities, but training would be delivered by other organisations coming in and utilising those facilities? Yes. And is it alongside training delivered by TasTAFE also?

**Dr BAKER** - That's correct.

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes, that's correct.

**Dr BAKER** - The majority of the training will still be TasTAFE-delivered training.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Dr BAKER** - We've got 11 new courses to support the clean energy sector and, where there's other short-term, part-time short courses that might be delivered, we will partner with other providers to ensure citizens of the north-west get access to that training.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Typically they're kind of industry-aligned providers that are mostly looking at the opportunities to partner, which is good.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Thank you. So, if you want to share it around, just let me know.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Sorry. You mentioned Devonport and Queenstown. We have a mention here of - and you mentioned the childcare centre in Devonport is Malangenna. What's the childcare centre in Launceston? That's in the footnotes here.

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**Dr BAKER** - Yes, so we do own a childcare centre at 54a Alanvale Road in Newnham.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - That is our site, and it is - we haven't commenced any formal conversations yet with the owners of Lady Gowrie, but it is a possibility that we might want to dispose of that in the future as well.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And it's still being used as a childcare centre?

**Dr BAKER** - They still use it, yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And so you want to dispose of it?

**Dr BAKER** - Possibly.

**Mr GARDNER** - The land, to them.

**Dr BAKER** - To the owners.

**Mr GARDNER** - They'll continue to operate.

**Dr BAKER** - So, they can continue operating.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. To continue to operate.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - So, first offer is there.

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes, they're leasing the land from us.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. Cool.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Because what Malangenna found was that they would like to make some investments in the new facilities and they couldn't because they didn't own then.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And couldn't. Yes. And it's the same situation.

**Dr BAKER** - It's the same.

**Mr ELLIS** - It's exactly the same.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And is that - I'm not going to say - is that possibly a current theme for some of the other - do you have many childcare centres on TAFE land throughout the other spots or not?

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**Mr GARDNER** - There are three others.

**Dr BAKER** - One other.

**Mr GARDNER** - That's right. There's one at Clarence as well.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**Mr GARDNER** - Which is also on land leased from us. Yes, it is. That's correct.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - And so, obviously, if this is - there may be conversations with Clarence about the same thing.

**Mr GARDNER** - There could well be.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Well, that would have to be a board decision though, wouldn't it? To divest itself of that land, if it's -

**Mr GARDNER** - Yes. Absolutely. Yes.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If I could just ask you, with regard to the new opening of the health hub - it was last year, from memory - at TasTAFE in Alanvale, and I know that's for training in mental health, youth work and alcohol and other drugs, can you advise, minister - or through you, minister - how TasTAFE is using the facility to support training? So, which areas, how many students does it have, and which courses, what courses are actually covered?

**Dr BAKER** - Thanks, minister. We did open the health hub at Alanvale campus in October 2025, thanks to a \$5 million investment from the Tasmanian government. As you mentioned, the core focus is on community services training in the areas of mental health, alcohol and other drugs, youth work, domestic violence and the like.

It's co-designed with industry, our learning programs, and incorporates virtual classrooms. So, again, a little bit use of the contemporary digital technology. It's online, campus-based and a lot of workplace delivery modes. And importantly, people who deliver some of these courses have also had the lived experience, which is really adding to the richness of the experience that our students are facing.

It officially opened 28 October 2025, and at the beginning of this year the Cert IV in Mental Health Peer Work, which was a new course for us to offer, has 16 full-time learners. In terms of enrolments across the other programs, I don't have those with me today.

**CHAIR** - If I could put that on notice, perhaps, just to find out what other courses actually are included there.

**Dr BAKER** - Sure. Yes. Will do.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt, and then I'll come back to Ms Webb.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. I just wanted to get an update on how TasTAFE is approaching the Education department to get people interested in apprentices and traineeships. It's something that I always - coming from an advanced manufacturing industry, there was a lot of talk of, 'Oh, if you can't achieve other things then go and get an apprenticeship'.

And I think there's a narrative shift that needs to happen in relation to that because there were a lot of people who were trades that were earning a lot more than me with a university degree. What is TasTAFE doing in that space to try to get the bright kids into the trades as well?

**Mr ELLIS** - There's probably some stuff that we'll touch on when we go to the Skills and Jobs broader piece because, like our Career Connector services and things like that, are really excellent.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Okay. Jumping ahead.

**Mr ELLIS** - But I'll pass to the team at TasTAFE to talk about some of the specific works that you guys do.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. I'll ask the question again. Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes. I agree that it's an important aspect to ensure we've got students flowing through the trades careers. Probably two specific answers. We're just in the process now of redeveloping our marketing strategy for the next three years and there's a really, really strong focus on that in driving promotional activities targeting specific cohorts, including trade - young people into trade. So, we'll see our marketing strategy in the future have some specific initiatives around that.

The second thing I'd say is that we've been focusing really heavily on pathways programs - the pre-app programs - and we've had some great success across plumbing, carpentry and electrical, working with industry to drive more pre-app, and also the civil construction - sorry, I've forgotten the acronym - but the civil construction association.

**Mr ELLIS** - CCF.

**Dr BAKER** - CCF.

**Mr ELLIS** - Federation.

**Dr BAKER** - Federation, which has had some really good outcomes. And we've got about 100 more students undertaking pathway programs at the Cert II level in trades this year than we did have last year.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. And something for the minister as well, something that we found, a lot of the problem was that kids doing work experience not having the ability to actually use tools because of insurance and things like that, that just kept - they'd come to the work site and all they'd be able to do is sweep floors. They went, 'This isn't fun. I'm gonna go do something else'. So, I think that's a - and I might bring that up with the education department tomorrow as well, but just a comment for getting these kids involved. They need to enjoy it.

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**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. And there are some really interesting - and a kind of broader portfolio, really interesting pieces of work that we're doing to help those young people get some of the, I suppose, the skills basis that they need so they can work safely on site when they want to do work experience.

Because, yes, it can be a barrier, and maybe these days there's not as many young people who have spent time in their folks' workshop and things like that that you and I probably experienced, Mr Hiscutt - and particularly as we're looking to attract a broader cohort of people into the trades. Some people don't necessarily think 'I want to be a tradie' until they're really thinking about what their career is. So, as a kid they might not have picked up those skills. We can sort of talk about it later. But doing a bit of work to smooth that path and give young people a bit of a sense of, if they don't necessarily have some of the skills because they haven't grown up around trades or on farms and things like that, what do you need to do first so that you can succeed? Because, yes, being a tradie is a great career - it can lead you to some pretty amazing places.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - As is well known by the current minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Who started off in a trade.

**Mr ELLIS** - Absolutely. That's right. That's right.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb, did you have a question?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Back to me. It's all good.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm just going to pick up one of the questions I was asking earlier, which was around a breakdown of the number of teachers who have left in the last couple of years, across each of the years. You told me you need to take that on notice. Now, I can imagine that might be the case for a couple of years back, but I'm pretty sure you could probably tell me the figures for this most recent previous year. So, I'm looking for a figure of teachers who have left or been exited and a gender breakdown of that figure, if possible. Thank you.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - And if you just identify what year you're talking about.

**Dr BAKER** - Employee separations from March 2025 to March 2026, I've got a percentage of 11, but I just - I'll need to manually add that up.

**Mr ELLIS** - Do you want to go through and I'll - so we've got one deceased, two dismissed, 15 redundant, 20 resigned, 14 retired, and two NIP, which, I think that's 43.

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**Ms WEBB** - Is this a table that you could potentially table for us, so it would be easier to see the detail of it?

**Dr BAKER** - Of course.

**Ms WEBB** - Does it have a gender breakdown on it as well?

**Dr BAKER** - It doesn't.

**Ms WEBB** - Is that something you're able to get, then, for us?

**Dr BAKER** - I'd imagine so, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - If we put that part of it on notice. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - And sorry, NIP would be?

**Dr BAKER** - It's a negotiated separation, effectively.

**Mr ELLIS** - Okay. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you have in that table that you might table for us here also the years prior to the most recent years, say, if we get three years' worth of data?

**Dr BAKER** - Sure.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - And Ms Webb, that one's March 2025 to March 2026.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, maybe if we provide that year and then we just go financial years, going back, if that's helpful.

**Ms WEBB** - The two previous to that.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Another area that I'd like to talk about is course fees, looking to track course fees and particularly increases that may have occurred, or otherwise - decreases - across recent years. Do you have some sort of table where you've got your courses laid out and your course fees that show tracking over time for those fees?

**Dr BAKER** - That's something we'd be able to provide. We're actually going through a course review right now. We can discuss that with the board across all of our different cohorts of students - international, fee for service, commercial, our subsidised commercial - sorry, our subsidised rates. That price review is actually on foot as we speak and not finalised.

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**Ms WEBB** - Okay. So, is that something I'll be able to put to you as a question on notice to get back to us with that?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes. Thanks.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Am I right in saying we've got 2026 course fees at 1.7 per cent Hobart CPI as a kind of -

**Dr BAKER** - A general CPI increase.

**Mr ELLIS** - That's generally what it's been. So we can get you a few years back as well.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. And I'm looking for not necessarily per cent increases, but just figures.

**Dr BAKER** - Dollar values, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Thank you. On the matter of - and you'll be familiar, I've asked you questions about this area before - the closing down of the lab tech courses that occurred across last year and into this year. The peak association for lab technicians has stated it's aware of no local provider for lab tech qualifications following the scrapping of the TasTAFE courses in those areas.

And I think that claims have been made otherwise. But my questions around it are: can you tell us who the government's new preferred provider for those lab tech qualifications is, if there is one, and also, what is the plan for the TasTAFE laboratory infrastructure that will no longer be used for those courses?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll go to TasTAFE on the second part of the question. On the first part of the question, I think I'm right - I'll go to Ms Paterson, but I think I'm right in saying that there's three and they're currently meeting the demand that we've seen come through. But Ms Paterson.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes, thank you. So, yes, that's correct, minister. There's three providers currently delivering that qualification. There's a number delivering it through apprenticeship and traineeship model and there's a current funding program open to, available to providers to deliver it as a non-apprenticeship pathway. And I know that there's a couple of providers having a number of conversations with employers about how best to run that model and to test demand.

**Ms WEBB** - Could I have the details of those providers? Thank you. And whether they're local or not, and whether they deliver in-person courses here in Tasmania.

**Ms PATERSON** - They're not currently contracted by Skills Tasmania, so there isn't any existing arrangements in place at the moment. There's a funding program available for them to access. For the Cert III in lab - which qualification, sorry, was it that you were -

**Ms WEBB** - I'm interested in all of them.

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**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. Okay.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Ms PATERSON** - Cert III in Laboratory Skills, we have Alan Bartlett Consulting, Labtech Training Victoria and Melbourne Tech Institute.

**CHAIR** - Excuse me, if you could just pop your microphone a bit closer, please. Thank you.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. And the learners in all of those can undertake that training in Tasmania, and that's approved as an apprenticeship and traineeship. For the Cert IV in -

**Ms WEBB** - Sorry to interrupt before you go on to the next one. So, when it's approved for an apprenticeship or a traineeship, does that mean somebody has to have an employment role - an employment lined up - in order to do that?

**Ms PATERSON** - For that particular qualification by those providers, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Ms PATERSON** - But there are other pathways.

**Ms WEBB** - So, someone who's just looking to get this qualification but hasn't yet secured employment, they can't do those courses. Because, of course, this was one of the issues that was raised when the courses were scrapped, that what was provided previously was - people could step in, get their qualification and then go to a range of employers after that with their qualification and gain work.

Many of those jobs come up in Tasmania, particularly in schools and the health sector. Now you have to have - I'm interested if we have a situation where people have to have a job lined up before they go to get their qualification.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. So, thank you. So, as I mentioned, the Train Now program is the Skills Tasmania program that is currently open which has funding available for existing workers and jobseekers. We don't have any current contracts under that program at the moment, but we know that there are providers interested in working towards accessing that program.

**Ms WEBB** - To deliver the training under it?

**Ms PATERSON** - To deliver the training under it.

**Ms WEBB** - But then people accessing it as students.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Need to have a job, did you say?

**Ms PATERSON** - No, jobseeker and existing worker.

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**Ms WEBB** - Existing worker sounds like you need to have a job.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. Jobseeker, you do not need to have a job.

**Ms WEBB** - But do you need to have particular circumstances, that you're receiving a jobseeker payment or that you've got some sort of circumstances to qualify, like that?

**Ms PATERSON** - No.

**Mr ELLIS** - Existing worker is any worker; that's not, say, employed in the lab tech area. Am I right?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes, correct. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. So, potentially open to anyone. So, we've got that Skills Tas Train Now.

**Ms PATERSON** - Train Now is the name of the program.

**Ms WEBB** - Train Now. But no providers contracted.

**Ms PATERSON** - Not at the moment.

**Ms WEBB** - Why is that?

**Ms PATERSON** - Because our understanding is that the providers are currently working to test the market, including working with Education to understand their needs, and that program is available there for them once they get to the point of being ready to make that application.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. So, then we were making our way through the Cert III. You talked to me about the Skills Tas Train Now - you've talked to me about. What about the other, higher - the Cert IV or the diploma, providers for those?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. The Cert IV is also available as an apprenticeship pathway.

**Ms WEBB** - So, you have to have a job?

**Ms PATERSON** - You have to have an approved apprenticeship, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Ms PATERSON** - And the diploma is also an apprenticeship pathway.

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**Ms WEBB** - So, we've really closed the door. There's one potential, although not yet at the moment contracted to any one option, for people to be qualified in these areas without first having a job in some form and being on an apprenticeship.

**Ms PATERSON** - So, any jobseeker or any employee, an existing business, who wants to upskill or reskill into lab tech is eligible through that Train Now program.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, except we're not providing it yet because they're testing the water to see what the need is.

**Ms PATERSON** - We have the program open, so it's really up to the provider to come forward and access that program now.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Ms PATERSON** - We've been having a number of ongoing discussions with the provider to encourage them to do so.

**Ms WEBB** - And so what's the timeline on that, on securing a provider? Because when I've asked questions about the Department of Education's rate of employing new lab techs in, it's a reasonable number every year that they employ in. So, there's a pipeline of employment there that needs to be filled.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - So, how long do we keep considering this and trying to find a provider or encourage a provider before we start to find our education department running short of lab techs to employ in?

**Ms PATERSON** - We've also worked with DECYP in relation to their workforce profile. We understand that they currently don't have any gap in their workforce. Obviously, they will need to continue to renew that workforce. They can do that from existing qualified people. They don't have to be recently graduated to support that workforce. So, there will continue to be a pipeline, even in the absence of a jobseeker qualification being provided outside an apprenticeship. Nevertheless, we will continue to encourage providers to access that funding to make that pathway available.

**Ms WEBB** - Is it potentially the situation though, we could end up never securing someone to provide that qualification here if we can't encourage a provider to put their hand up?

**Ms PATERSON** - In all likelihood, if a provider wasn't encouraged by the available funding to step into that delivery, it would be due to a lack of demand. So, where there is demand -

**Ms WEBB** - What's the level of demand we're requiring? As soon as you put it out to a for-profit provider of any sort, it's going to be a more difficult situation than a public provider, isn't it? Because there's a public good in providing it through a public system where demand might fluctuate. Even if you've got a smaller number, you're still going to put them through.

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And if we're setting a higher bar for demand, we're never going to get a for-profit provider in this space. We'll never have a pipeline of workers in this space, is my concern here.

**Ms PATERSON** - We don't have a barrier for demand in our funding profiles. That's just how the market will - responds to it.

**Ms WEBB** - No, but the market works that way when it's a for-profit provider, because we ripped it out of the public system. It's going to be a very interesting situation, I think, for DECYP down the track. And if DECYP ends up recruiting from the other organisations who use these people, then they're going to be workers short somewhere at some point down the track.

**Mr ELLIS** - Workers who could do an apprenticeship program as well and work through the way that many other operators do.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, that might work, except most schools have maybe one lab technician or two. So, an apprentice lab tech into a school with no other lab techs is going to have a hard time providing the right service to the school, I would have thought, coming in with no training.

**Ms PATERSON** - Through you, minister. Because the private providers have a lower fixed cost than TasTAFE, they are often able to deliver to smaller cohorts of people more efficiently. So, they don't need large cohorts to make a course viable in the way that TAFE potentially does.

**Ms WEBB** - And are they going to come in and use our TasTAFE lab facilities to deliver their courses?

**Ms PATERSON** - That'll be a matter for TasTAFE.

**Dr BAKER** - Well, to answer your second question, our plans for that, it would be that we would decommission that space.

**Ms WEBB** - You would decommission that space?

**Dr BAKER** - Decommission at the end of the delivery this year, and through our infrastructure plan and conversation with our board, consider alternative uses for that space. Having said that, we'd be open to considering if a private provider came and said to us, 'Hey, we've got  $x$  amount of students, we'd like to consider using that space', we'd be open to that.

**Ms WEBB** - That would be the ultimate irony, wouldn't it? Ripping it out of the public system and then letting our facilities get used by a private provider.

**CHAIR** - Mr Edmunds, I think, has a follow-up.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Not to come over the top when you haven't seen that completed.

**CHAIR** - No, please.

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**Mr EDMUNDS** - I don't understand the ins and outs, but is there a way to potentially put that off? If there is this lag, clearly removing the potential space to provide the opportunity would create another barrier to that occurring.

I get that, potentially, with the siloed approach of each organisation trying to look after its own backyard, why you might make that decision. But considering the broader implication of removing a space where another provider may be able to step in to provide clearly what's a required course for the future of Tasmania, would you consider putting off that decommissioning?

**Dr BAKER** - As the relatively new CEO and having reviewed these decisions and looked at the demand over the last three years, the demand has been very, very low, which was essentially a main reason for TasTAFE to make the decision that it's made.

**Ms WEBB** - That's disputed. That's absolutely disputed.

**Dr BAKER** - The current cohort that's finished has, off the top of my head, 12 students, eight of whom are international students who will go back to their home country.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - So, we've effectively got fours and fives and sixes that are enrolling in these programs. So, I'd have to say, I support the decision of the previous CEO and exec around the decommissioning of these courses.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Putting that all aside, though, if this is the space that can be used, is it worth considering some levity around when it might be send the sledgehammers in?

**Dr BAKER** - Sure. Yes, is the short answer.

**Mr ELLIS** - I suppose, probably, the broader thing as well is that many of the providers provide in-workplace training because they're smaller providers, more flexible, that sort of thing. Yes. The -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - The space itself, in your view, is not essential for that. I don't know. I'm just trying to figure it out.

**Dr BAKER** - Certainly not in an apprenticeship model. In an apprenticeship model it'd be done primarily on the job.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - When you've secured a job in the first place before you're qualified. Not for a whole range - not in this space.

**Mr ELLIS** - Which is typically how plumbers, carpenters, electricians, a whole range of different people go through these courses. And typically, that's how most people go through Lab Tech as well. What have we got? Currently, the data I have, RTO qualification enrolments for the period 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026 in Lab Tech is 29 currently across Certs IIIs, IVs and diploma.

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**Ms WEBB** - Yes. We probably had something similar to that in TasTAFE last year when we were still running the full courses. Yes. So there you go.

**Mr ELLIS** - We've got providers who are meeting the market.

**Ms WEBB** - Not true. It's completely disputed.

**CHAIR** - Questions, or Mr -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - If you want to keep going.

**Ms WEBB** - No. Please.

**CHAIR** - Mr Edmunds, have you got another question?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I'll just move to another area, but we can always come back - one that, perhaps, minister, you and I share an interest in. The Tasmanian seafood industry has written to you and your government warning that the training system is not working for the sector, and seafood is worth more than \$1.5 billion a year to Tasmania and supports thousands of jobs across wild catch, aquaculture, processing, freight and regional communities. Given industry has raised these concerns directly, what have you done to secure long-term workforce and training support for seafood?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. This is in the broader skills and training side of things.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Do you want me to go to that next output, then?

**Mr ELLIS** - We could do that if you wanted in the next output, because it is a really good example of where -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I just didn't want to get to that and then be told we have to come back here.

**Mr ELLIS** - No. That's fine. Yes. And it is actually an example of where industry-aligned training delivers for a high-priority area for the state, because TasTAFE provides virtually zero training in this space. But we have an outstanding industry provider and some other providers, as well, that we support through the broader skill system, but happy to talk about it later.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I just thought I'd go there because I was going to lab tech under that, but I might save that for later then, perhaps.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any other TasTAFE -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I can come back, but give me a moment to get organised. Perhaps, if we -

**CHAIR** - That's all right. Ms Webb, did you want to -

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**Ms WEBB** - You don't want that?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - No.

**CHAIR** - Not at the moment.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Let me just look through. The Automotive Centre of Excellence that's in the budget papers, is there a delivery date for that? A completion date?

**Dr BAKER** - We'll send you an invitation.

**Mr ELLIS** - We have. It opened about two weeks ago.

**Ms WEBB** - Did it?

**Mr ELLIS** - And we'll have an official opening in about two weeks.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. I don't think I've seen an invitation.

**Mr ELLIS** - We welcome the member for Nelson as well.

**CHAIR** - Minister, the budget papers mention TasTAFE student managing system replacement. What actually does the new system mean for the teachers and students, and how will it contribute to improve learner experience? Can you explain just a little bit about the replacement?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. This is really transformational for us. We touched on it a little bit with the digital rollout and we've been really pleased with the way that TAFE and Skills are really upgrading these core IT systems. It'll really change the way that our teachers operate, the way we understand our business, but most importantly for our learners, it will really upgrade their experience of the system as well. I'll pass to Dr Baker.

**CHAIR** - Interesting. Thank you.

**Dr BAKER** - If I can give you some specific examples. At the moment, for example, when a student enrolls we are unable to give them a timetable, given enrolments generally take about three months before - at the time of enrolment before classes start. Typically, at the moment, we invite the students along on day 1, do an induction and say, 'Here's your timetable.' What that does is, of course, not give them any time to organise their lives, their childcare, part-time work arrangements and the like.

The new student management system, given it'll be an integrated system between our timetabling and enrolment function, means that at the time of enrolment, so three months before the class starts, students will be able to get a timetable on the day they enrol. That'll be a fundamental benefit for all of our students. From a sort of efficiency and productivity measure, we'll be able to track our workforce, their teaching hours, and make some determinations around productivity levels across the organisation.

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Employers will be able to log onto an employer portal, which will be great, because particularly for the apprentice and trainee employers, they'll be able to track the progress of their apprentices and making sure - or helping us make sure - that those apprentices stay on track with their progression. And as the minister sort of alluded to, just internally with us, at the moment our enrolment systems are generally manual. Having that all in an integrated system is going to improve our workflows.

**CHAIR** - Statewide.

**Dr BAKER** - And statewide. Yes. Absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. It sounds really good. Thank you. Ms Webb?

**Ms WEBB** - Sure. Are there further course cuts planned into the next financial year?

**Dr BAKER** - I'm happy to announce that just yesterday I sent a message out to the entire organisation saying that we completed a really thorough evidence-based review of every single one of our courses. There are about 15 or so criteria or lenses that we apply to each of those courses. So, I'm confident that the outcomes of the review are very strong. The outcome is that there will be no more large-scale course closures in the near future.

That's not to say that it's kind of normal experience. Certainly, my experience in the debt sector, but if you can think of any business, there's always a bit of turnover of product as things change, consumer demand changes. But from wholesale exits, no. And I'm really pleased that our courses align strongly with the workforce needs and the priority sectors that exist in the Tasmanian community, and also with our deed with Skills.

**Ms WEBB** - No large-scale. Small tweaks are possible.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - But are you aware of any tweaks, then, into the next financial year, for example, the near future?

**Dr BAKER:** There'll probably be some courses, again, with sort of low enrolments or where there's been some changes in industry. If I give an example, in the agricultural industry there's been low enrolments in the advanced diplomas for a long time when you've got students go straight into TIA, the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture that's run by UTAS. And most of our enrolments, in fact, almost entirely - 95 per cent or so - are in the Cert III, Cert IV kind of technician.

There's a likelihood that we'll exit in advanced diploma. That's not confirmed. I've got to go through my board and governance processes. But it's those types of things that we might consolidate our delivery and deliver more of the courses that industry want as opposed to ones that they're alternatives to.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you publish enrolment figures, or can you provide them if you can't point me to somewhere they're published - enrolment figures for new students, say, across calendar years or financial years? Looking at the last three, for example?

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**Dr BAKER** - You certainly can, but we don't publish those. No. They would probably be available in the dataset across the sector.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, to break out the TasTAFE particulars. Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - We can provide that. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Great. I'll send that through. And in terms of that, say, with new enrolments in annual figure, are you able to break that data out into gender and into age brackets or any of those sorts of characteristics of students?

**Mr ELLIS** - Is it for any particular course, Ms Webb, or -

**Ms WEBB** - No. I'm just interested across the board to get a picture of what that looks like.

**Dr BAKER** - Our business intelligence functions are a bit immature at the moment, and our reporting system, so I won't commit to the breakdown. But we'll see.

**Ms WEBB** - Maybe just even a gender breakdown. Can you do that, potentially, or is that not information -

**Dr BAKER** - I think so.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Dr BAKER** - The SMS will be - that'll be the report. At the moment, everything's out on spreadsheets.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Okay. If we might just go to Mr Edmunds and come back.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Minister, what resources were released as a result of the cutting the 12 courses last year, and where, specifically, were those resources reallocated to? As I understand, that was agreed to between TasTAFE and Skills Tas at the time. And were resources reallocated to increasing deed-funded activity in priority training areas, as required by Skills Tasmania and can you provide some evidence of this?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. I'll pass to TasTAFE to talk through.

**Dr BAKER** - I'm not sure that I'll be able to answer that question to a degree of detail that you'd be happy with today, I might have to take that one on advisement.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That's fine. That was an agreement between the interim CEO and not yourself, is that the reason? Because I'm happy to put it on notice, that's fine.

**Mr GARDNER** - If I may, that was certainly the basis on which we undertook the process and that was the agreement in relation to our deed funding. That's the commitment we made.

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**Mr EDMUNDS** - So it's happened? Yeah, okay. I might put it on notice, and that way we're all speaking the same language.

**Dr BAKER** - As a general rule, we're moving our funding towards high-priority courses in high-priority sectors that are of need to the state. So, as general rule, I'd say yes, that's happened.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yep, no sweat, I'll just put it on notice then we're all happy. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - You answered my question before about looking ahead, any further cuts to courses in the pipeline, and so I guess the complementary question to that is looking ahead, and given the operational efficiencies measures that are being applied across this budget, are we looking at further staff cuts in the upcoming years and across the forward estimates of this budget? If so, what's the quantum that we'd be looking for there, potentially, from TasTAFE?

**Mr ELLIS** - We've already tabled some information in the other place about some of this work, but I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE to, I suppose, talk through it further.

**Dr BAKER** - We need to consider where we're going to find savings over the four year period of the budget forecasts. At the moment, we've solutioned approximately \$22 million of the \$45 million worse case scenario. At the moment, our bank balance is strong, we've got cash in the bank, it's just that the current rates - or the rates probably at the beginning of the year - if we kept spending at those rates, in four years we would be in an approximately \$45 million deficit position. So, I'm very optimistic that in the next two years we'll be in strong financial positions and that the initiatives that we're putting in place today will help us in those third and fourth years.

The focus for our organisation, not only just finding additional savings initiatives internally, but, of course, is focusing on extra revenue growth, and I think that's been missed in some of the public debate. We've got some fantastic products and services that we offer at commercial or fee for service, approximately 25 per cent of our revenue is generated through our own commercial means, and it's a strong focus for myself, the executive, and indeed our business development team that we drive further revenue growth in those outer years in particular.

**Ms WEBB** - Are we looking at in the vicinity of a hundred TasTAFE teachers maybe to be cut ultimately across operation efficiencies or -

**Dr BAKER** - Noting that we're not cutting any additional courses, I couldn't imagine that would be anything other than a handful of teachers.

**Ms WEBB** - Handful? Okay. When I think back to early 2021, prior to the state election that was called in the first half of that year, then premier Gutwein promised as an election promise going into the 2021 election that there would be 100 net new teachers going into TasTAFE in that term of government. What I'm interested to know is if we are to compare where we are at the moment with where we were at that point in time, plus a hundred that were promised, I'd like to see that comparative figure. Can you give me the teacher number, FTE and headcount, of TasTAFE back at, say, March 2021 compared to now?

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**Mr ELLIS** - It's probably worth mentioning, Ms Webb, that we've discussed, with that commitment, we delivered effectively about a 70 teacher equivalent uplift through additional teachers and additional hours training and those kind of things. Broadly speaking, that was what the organisation actually needed, the funding was made available for it, and then the - as we mentioned in these committees - then the commitment was finding, if there were specialised teachers in particular areas that were hard to recruit for - electrical is a classic example - then we'd remain open to that. Really, having made that funding available, it's now delivering the teaching that we need. We spoke before, Mr Hiscutt raised the huge bubble that came through of commencements around that time due to the COVID stimulus, and then since then we've normalised. You know, we wouldn't be hiring teachers for, you know, a learner number that is no longer applicable. We've seen that investment that's then been locked into the budget reprioritised to other key purposes, for example, the student management system and other investments for TasTAFE.

I suppose that's the broader kind of view, consider that commitment acquitted on the basis of the numbers that we then saw coming through, the funding has been made available, but in terms of the actual numbers as they now sit, I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE.

**Dr BAKER** - Thank you, minister, I think that summarises it well. Teacher numbers fluctuate as our demand fluctuates and, you know, the numbers required in 2021 probably don't relate to the numbers that are required today in 2026.

**Ms WEBB** - I appreciate that, but I'm still just asking for that figure to be provide. If you could provide it to me.

**Dr BAKER** - Sure.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Do I need to put that notice for you?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, please.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Minister, some RTI documents state that TasTAFE's cash balance projection is planned to go from \$29 million in the bank now to \$27 million in the red by 2029-30, I understand, a \$54 million deterioration. I'm interested in where that money is going.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yeah, so, obviously, we've spoken before about some significant investments, things like the student management system and a range of other key investments. We were actually probably carrying more cash than you would normally do, but because we had some of those opportunities in front of us, and then, obviously, some of the efficiencies to make sure that the cash profile is adjusted. I have, though, in terms of the statement of financial positions, as at 30 June in the Budget, \$29,050,000 for the 2026 estimated outcome. And then \$14 million and change in 2027, \$1.4 million in 2028, and \$1 million in 2029. I'll look to the team at TasTAFE to talk about the reconciliation.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That could be an updated figure, perhaps, or is it just different?

**Mr ELLIS** - Well, it's certainly the figure in the budget.

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**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yep. So that's an improvement on the numbers that were in the RTI?

**Dr BAKER** - I'd have to double check.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That's good news if it is.

**Dr BAKER** - It possibly reflects some of the changes that were made just in the last four or five months.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Okay, great, all right. I might come back to that, but that's good news if that's the case. One quick question to go right back to the lab tech, with the decommissioning, do we have any idea of what that will cost? Just to decommission the space.

**Dr BAKER** - No, we haven't undertaken any work yet, but it does take a long time. To the earlier point, you know, I wouldn't imagine that that space would be not available for some time, a year at least. We'll need to go through a procurement process to find someone to do the decommissioning, so it wouldn't be a quick process.

**Mr ELLIS** - One of the things that we do find though is that decommissioning provides some amazing opportunities. If you look at the Alanvale Health Hub and the taypani Learners Centre there, that was actually in the decommissioned textiles space, which was, of course, an area that, you know, there was some tough decisions made but that space is now providing for the care economy, youth work, new courses that we haven't run before, and peer support, and also that support space for learners to succeed, so yeah, there can be some really good opportunities that come from some of these facilities as we look to repurpose.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - So, to read between the lines, and I'm definitely not trying to verbal anybody, but you would only look to decommission once you had a new purpose for the space - would that be fair to say?

**Dr BAKER** - Probably fair to say we haven't really considered what we're doing with the space just yet. We have an infrastructure plan and we need to consider that space in line with the infrastructure plan, and I don't expect that the decommissioning will be a quick process.

**Mr ELLIS** - Dr Baker mentioned before as well, Mr Edmunds, that we're currently teaching out, so we have, obviously, obligations to students, so until that's finalised it'd be too early to look to change.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - We have a golf course on the eastern shore that was decommissioned before there was a plan for it, and then once they poisoned the greens it was going to cost millions of dollars to put golf back on there and now it's a waste of space. I just always think of that lesson when people talk about decommissioning useful spaces that they end up spending so much more money than they need to on something that could still be utilised, so definitely having watched others learn that lesson despite warnings from people such as myself, I would hate to see similar mistakes made in a different area.

**Mr ELLIS** - We also have a decommissioned rail yard that's going to be a heck of a stadium as well. Yes, but it's taken a while to get there, but yes, our experience with Alanvale -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Decommissioning things without a plan is just a waste of money.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. Our experience with Alanvale has been, yes - as we realign to focus on those kind of core areas that we are really looking for in the skills plan, that's often where we see the big gains for learners.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Minister, just before we leave the TasTAFE area to go more onto the skills and workforce growth, the Canvas system, the breach. I don't think anyone's mentioned the data breach that the Canvas system experienced. Just wondering, have any students, staff, contractors, et cetera, been identified as being at risk as a result of the data breach?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Armitage. I'll pass to the team from TasTAFE.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Dr BAKER** - Thanks for the question. We were made aware of the cyber incident, breach, on 6 May, and the advice at that stage was that the data included, fundamentally, communications between the teachers and the students in that learning environment, the Canvas. So, there was no indication at that stage that there was any personal information, login information, names and addresses, dates of birth, information of that nature that was released.

It was simply the conversations that were occurring between learner and teacher in relation to their units of competence and what they were learning. It was a global hack, if you like, or breach. It affected around 15,000 institutions worldwide. Our internal assessment was that there was low risk to our students. We took it offline, just to be sure, for about two days. And after we were advised from the Canvas CEO that they had fixed the breach and an external third party had -

**CHAIR** - Reached agreement with the threat actor, as opposed to fixed the breach, I think.

**Dr BAKER** - Yes. Apparently there were two things happening there. They were busily with a third party fixing the breach as well as arranging the -

**CHAIR** - The return of the data.

**Dr BAKER** - So, a couple of days after that we reinstated student and staff access to Canvas and there was really little impact on learning. We didn't lose too many teaching days. Fortunately, it kind of happened over a weekend, so we lost a couple of days either side, but no real impact on teaching.

**CHAIR** - Are you feeling comfortable that it won't happen again, that it's actually safe after that breach?

**Dr BAKER** - Yes, so I don't know the technical details, but we've done a few things at our end to strengthen our cyber controls. And, coincidentally, we were just finishing up a procurement process with Canvas because our licence is due to expire. So, in that procurement

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process, we are going back and putting some extra clauses in just to further strengthen and protect ourselves and our students from any future incidents.

## **DIVISION 11**

Department of State Growth

### **Output Group 3.1**

Skills and Workforce Growth

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If we have no further questions on TasTAFE. If, minister, we could move to 3.1, which is Skills and Workforce Growth. And I believe Mr Edmunds is leading my questioning.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. We've got the ones from before, don't we.

**Mr ELLIS** - If it works, we'll just change over.

**CHAIR** - Do you need to bring other people?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, gentlemen. Appreciate your time.

**CHAIR** - If we could just stop the broadcast for a moment, please, while we change over the table.

**The committee suspended from 3.14 p.m. to 3.15 p.m.**

## **DIVISION 11**

Department of State Growth

### **Output Group 3.1**

Skills and Workforce Growth

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. 3.1 Skills and Workforce Growth. If you'd just like to introduce the person at the table and Mr Edmund will lead off in the questioning.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair. We've got Mr Stuart Hollingsworth, Executive Director, Economy and Jobs Strategy.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Did you have any comment you wanted to make before Mr Edmunds starts?

**Mr ELLIS** - I've got an opening statement, but I understand our time's reasonably tight, so I'm happy if we take questions and -

**CHAIR** - We're not too bad this afternoon.

**Mr ELLIS** - If you want. All right.

**CHAIR** - If you've got something you'd like -

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**Mr ELLIS** - It's a heart-breaking work of staggering genius, Chair, so I'd better read it out.

**CHAIR** - Absolutely.

**Mr ELLIS** - The government is investing more than \$650 million across the forward Estimates in TasTAFE and our broader Skills and Jobs ecosystem, including our private RTOs. I'd like to acknowledge the important work of Skills Tasmania to steward this investment and ensure we're putting the learner centre.

Our government supports over one hundred registered training organisations through contestable grant programs, with training subsidies supporting jobseekers, existing workers, apprentices and areas of immediate training need.

Examples include SMT training for seafood and maritime, response training for the meat industry, and work and training and ability-bolstering training capacity for the care sector. Tasmania is a smaller market, so we've always leveraged the benefits of the national VET system for specific lower-demand skills; engaging interstate providers to come to Tasmania to train as well as supporting apprentices to train wherever opportunities exist for them to get the specialist skills they need has always offered us a solution for thin markets.

If learners are to be at the centre, we need the Tasmania VET system to remain agile and responsive. This means embracing change, leveraging strength across the system and delivery in a way that drives public value and maximises value for government investment. Government continues to work closely with learners, employers, training providers and officials to ensure our skill system is performing strongly and supporting Tasmanians into work.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Edmunds.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Great. Thank you. Back to the questions that were perhaps in the wrong output before. Minister, the Tasmanian seafood industry has written to you and your government warning that the training system is not working for the sector. As you know, seafood is worth more than \$1.5 billion a year to Tasmania and supports thousands of jobs across wild catch, aquaculture, processing, freight and regional communities.

Given industry has raised these concerns directly, what have you done to secure long-term workforce and training support for seafood?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. I'll pass over to Ms Paterson but suffice it to say it is a very important sector. It's actually our largest contestable allocation that goes to the seafood and maritime training, and a great example of industry being supported to lead its training workforce needs. I'll pass over to Ms Paterson.

**Ms PATERSON** - Thank you, minister. Through you. Yes. The average annual training subsidy commitment to the sector between 2020 and 2026 is \$2.7 million. Training subsidy commitments made to the sector between 2020 and 2026 for all training providers total \$19.45 million. We do understand that as a fairly small, agile training provider, the Seafood and Maritime Training RTO is impacted by short-term funding agreements.

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And that is why, with the minister's support, we are shifting to longer-term funding agreements from this year, which will help provide a greater certainty to support the viability of those smaller RTOs.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you. Having seen the correspondence, though, there's pretty clear feedback from that industry that the system is not working for them, so what fixes are potentially in place, or who's responsible for taking that feedback and seeing that what's being offered is fit for purpose?

**Ms PATERSON** - Through you, minister. I guess, the contestable programs are contestable, so there are often instances where RTOs are not successful in achieving their full ask through those processes. We do support assessments of applications through those programs with an evidence-based model that looks to where we need to support workforce growth across particular industries at any point in time.

We also have industry officers who work with particular industries to help understand their needs, so we can have not just that evidence base but also that insight from industry to inform those funding decisions. Sometimes the outcomes of those contestable programs, there is only - they are often oversubscribed. But certainly, the seafood sector does pretty well year on year, as evidenced by the sort of - \$2.7 million annual funding commitment.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Minister, seafood used to have dedicated workforce funding support. Now industry says it is stuck in a broader Skills Tasmania model. It is uncertain, competitive and failing to meet the needs of the sector, again evidenced by the correspondence. At the same time, lab tech courses, which you talked about before, which support testing work undertaken by the seafood sector, are being cut from TasTAFE. Do you accept that the current model is not working for seafood?

**Mr ELLIS** - They're the largest recipient of grants through the competitive process. You did mention before that it is competitive, and that's a good thing. It helps to maintain the best value for money for taxpayers and also, most importantly, the best outcomes for learners, because where learners are making their choices, then those choices are the things that, ultimately, need to be respected and supported.

We've seen seafood and maritime training, particularly, very competitive. There's other providers that have been looking to come into that space as well, but I'll look to Ms Paterson if there's anything further that you wanted to add.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. Thank you. Through you, minister. Perhaps, just to add that the current levels of funding that SMT are receiving are well above the levels that they were receiving when there was a seafood pledge in place.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - And based off that feedback that I received earlier this year, I think, have any changes or adjustments been made since then?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. I mentioned the move to longer-term funding agreements.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That's since the feedback was received.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Okay.

**Ms PATERSON** - We work fairly closely with the provider throughout the annual process to streamline our application process wherever we can. And I think we've learnt a lot from them, from their individual experience of running an RTO and how sometimes that red tape can be challenging, so we've aimed to streamline that to their benefit wherever we can.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Okay. And one last one under this umbrella. Minister, aquaculture has lost priority apprenticeship support for Certificate III and IV qualifications, making it harder to train workers for salmon, oysters and regional aquaculture jobs.

At the same time, as we talked about earlier, Tasmania needs practical technical workers, including lab technicians, for water quality testing, food safety, biosecurity and environmental monitoring. What have you done to restore aquaculture support and protect the technical workforce seafood depends on?

**Mr ELLIS** - I'm not sure if you're aware, Mr Edmunds, but that's actually your federal Labor colleagues who made that change. But we continue to advocate on behalf of the seafood sector to your colleagues up there and would recommend that you do the same. Certainly, from our perspective, it's a really important sector for Tasmania, and I think it was a clear mistake by the federal Labor government. We'll continue to work to support it.

The other bit of advocacy that we've done for the federal Labor government is to try and help them understand that the learner needs to be at the centre of the vocational education system. And instead, by trying to put TAFE at the centre, which is what they've been doing, it means that people who are working in industries that are not covered by TAFE but are covered by industry are not having their choices honoured and respected and supported.

In this case, seafood and maritime training is one of our largest areas, but it's largely overlooked by the federal government with their fee-free TAFE approach. Ditto when it comes to other important industries like transport; forestry is another classic. Yes. I think it's important that that skills list changes and I would welcome any Tasmanian advocacy in addition to the government for that.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you. Thanks very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Again, just going through book 4 of the Budget, I just wanted to gain an understanding of exactly, I guess, what this means. It's the supporting access to skilled workforce through state nomination of skilled migrants. I understand the concept, but just the fluctuations in numbers and how we've set the targets for that. It's page 83 of that document. If I can get an understanding of how or why we've set those particular targets.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. They're actually set by the federal government, but we work closely with them, advocating so that we can get a good allocation for Tasmania. We're disappointed in the recent past about the particular allocations. That being said, we have appreciated the partnership with the federal government on our Designated Area Migration Agreement work,

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which will provide some greater flexibility that will recognise the particulars of Tasmanian's economy and our community.

The numbers do go up and down, as the feds have been trying to get a hold of their, kind of, broader allocations. There's also been states that in the past have chosen not to take up their allocation, like Queensland, who are deciding to do that. It means that there's less space in the system. Certainly, from our perspective, we would like a more smooth pipeline and a larger number, but we're doing some work with the federal government that will kind of deliver another pathway.

But Ms Paterson, would this be one to pass to you if there's anything further you can add?

**Ms PATERSON** - I'm happy to talk to the numbers if that's helpful, minister, through you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Ms PATERSON** - Tasmania received a reduced allocation of 1850 nomination places for the 2025-26 program year, with all other states and territories also experiencing reductions, as the minister mentioned. As at 31 March 2026, more than 2714 registrations of interest have been received for those places. We're working through that process at the moment, and we've processed 1053 of those nominations.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you. The target's 286, but you're saying we've only been allocated - for the 2025-26 year the target is 2860, but you're saying we've only - is that a financial year or is that a calendar year?

**Ms PATERSON** - That would be a financial year, I think, if it's -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. There's a bit of a disconnect there. Or was that target made after the budget papers were produced, perhaps? I imagine there's timings on these sorts of things.

**Ms PATERSON** - No. The nomination would have been received late last year, I believe. I'll just check.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you. Obviously, an important resource for us to use with the skills we have.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. The target's definitely for a financial year.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. And so, can you help me understand that disconnect, I think, between your number of 1200 or 1300 versus the budget papers of 2860?

**Ms PATERSON** - Just waiting for my team to type real fast.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That's all right. Coming through momentarily. Happy to come back to that answer to that question. And if there's other's questions, then we can get that answer when it comes through.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. We can come back to that if that's helpful. Yes.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Minister, if I could just ask you, with regard to the Regional Jobs Hub. My understanding is it's only secured till 2027. What is the government doing to support the ongoing operation of this model which, I believe, is making quite a difference to get Tasmanians into work and to ensure that employers have access to the skills they need? In the north, I know that we've benefitted from the Northern Employment and Business Hub, and it is important for it to continue. Can you give me a bit of an indication or an update?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks. Yes. As you mention, funded in the Budget, but we'll need to, obviously, have further discussions in future budget rounds. This area, in particular, as far as employment support, is an area that is largely a federal government responsibility, but that Tasmania has been able to take the lead to provide an innovative model. And certainly, there's been lots of interest nationally for what Tasmania has been able to do, because we seek to deliver a system that will deliver a job outcome rather than just a compliance outcome, which can be sometimes the frustration with the traditional job networks as they are run by the Commonwealth.

We've had some good discussions with the Commonwealth about sharing the task of funding for the future. Now, nothing's been locked in, at this stage, but certainly, given that this is an area of federal government responsibility, that Tasmania has been able to provide some really interesting and excellent innovations, we'd be hopeful that they would recognise that. But I'll pass to Mr Hollingsworth, if you want to talk more broadly about some of the opportunities through the jobs hub network.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Absolutely. Thank you, minister. Just further to the minister's comment on the federal government engagement. We've actually been working for a number of years trying to seek federal government reform to employment services systems. This goes back to submissions to the full employment White Paper and Senate inquiry into employment services reform, which specifically named up Tasmania as an opportunity to pilot this innovative approach.

We've been continuing to try and push for that engagement, and we're, I guess, now working in the environment where the federal minister last week announced a further refresh to the employment services system.

We'll be looking to engage in that process to highlight the innovative work that we've done with our regional jobs hubs and the impacts that's having in communities in supporting regional economic growth, training outcomes and really navigating the complexity of this complex employment education training system in the community, which is why we're really keen to see much more local-led, -designed learner/employer-led programs. And, I guess, this is a broader agenda about having a much more integrated approach with the federal government around programs. We're very active in that work, working closely with the hubs - as independent to government, of course, and their work - to engage with the federal government on that reform, but, at the same time, continuing to deliver outcomes and supporting our regions to thrive.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb, did you have a question? Yes.

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**Ms WEBB** - Yes. I've got one we carried over from last time to be relevant to this area as well, which was, firstly, around any digital infrastructure projects that we haven't spoken about already that relate to this area, and particularly in relation to the purpose of those projects and where we're at in terms of delivering them, particularly in terms of budget and timeline.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb. I'll pass over to Ms Paterson to talk through this one, please.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. Thank you, minister, through you. Currently, the department is delivering the core systems replacement project, which has recently adopted the name Skills Connect. That is a project to replace two of our ICT systems that support a range of functions that are critical to the administration and management of Tasmania's VET system. Funding of \$10 million is allocated to the project through our state purchasing plan, supported by the minister, and that's underpinned by an uplift in the National Skills Agreement funding.

Implementation of the new system will deliver an enhanced experience for learners, employers and registered training organisations, with more efficient service delivery and streamlined administrative processes. The redesign of 56 business processes from the current system shows a consistent pattern of automation replacing manual handling and allowing that sort of work to focus on more value-added tasks.

An open tender process was run, and a contract was signed already in September last year. And my understanding is that that is currently on budget and on time, subject to - that's, obviously, only very early in the implementation phase.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Thank you. And then, when is that expected to be completed, the project timeline?

**Ms PATERSON** - It's expected during 2027 to complete.

**Ms WEBB** - Due in 2027.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Within the 2026-27 financial year, like, the first half of 2027 or will it spill into the following financial year?

**Ms PATERSON** - I suspect it will spill into the latter part of 2027.

**Ms WEBB** - The \$10 million, is that a figure that is being stepped out across these financial years, or how has that been allocated?

**Ms PATERSON** - Because it was funded through the National Skills Agreement -

**Ms WEBB** - Is that the entire \$10 million?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes

**Ms WEBB** - I see.

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**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes? Sorry, I interrupted you.

**Ms PATERSON** - It's been allocated against the contract of the -

**Ms WEBB** - It has already come?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes, as an accrued expense.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Thank you. And that's the only one to mention in this space, your infrastructure one?

**Mr ELLIS** - There've been some smaller projects that are really quite interesting, less costly, but more in the kind of data-sharing space. I don't know, Alex, if you want to talk through some of those.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. There's been a number of data projects. One of them is a contract that we had with Victoria University to develop a regional dashboard that looks at labour force projections. That helps us ensure that we're directing our skills funding to deliver best value for money so that we're supporting training in areas that are most needed by the economy and the community. And that's currently being updated at the moment so that we can be sure that it's reflecting all of the up-to-date investments, including some of the major projects in energy and other things.

In addition to that, there's also been a lot of work done with the Department of Education to try and - which sort of goes, I think, to the pathways question from earlier - track learners through the education system and into the VET system so we can better understand what some of the challenges are in our young people making that transition from school into vocational training.

**Ms WEBB** - What does that look like, tracking learners across those two systems?

**Ms PATERSON** - It's looking at the data that the VET system has and the data that the Department of Education has and trying to line up, on an individual level, I guess, where the learner's moving into this system over here.

**Ms WEBB** - Here's a student in this system over here and here - where do they appear over here in this set of data, from the other system?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - That sounds tricky.

**Ms PATERSON** - It is tricky but a really important piece of work.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. And then, the other area that we spoke about in the TasTAFE area, but I was flagged that there might also be relevance here, is around Closing the Gap progress. Any projects related to our Closing the Gap commitments that sit in this portfolio area?

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**Ms PATERSON** - Yes, so minister, through you. The skills plan has an objective to better address the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal learners in Tasmania. We have 7.3 per cent of 15- to 64-year-olds of government-funded VET students in Tasmania were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent, compared to a 7.4 per cent rate for all of Australia.

We provide an additional loading on top of the base government subsidy for Aboriginal learners, which is 20 per cent. The policy aims to encourage greater levels of participation in training that would not occur without that government support. And it's expected that RTOs pass that on to learners through benefits by reducing fees or providing additional support for those learners.

Through the National Skills Agreement, we've also secured \$2 million of Australian Government funding to deliver specific initiatives for Aboriginal learners and organisations that complement broader reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. So, that particular investment will support two new initiatives to boost the capacity of the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Tasmania.

One is a direct investment in the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, which is currently the only Aboriginal-controlled RTO in Tasmania, to build the organisation's capacity to support learners and deliver training in areas of strategic priority. So, that's \$1.5 million. And then, we have a further grant program for other Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to design initiatives that address their priorities in the skills and training sector, and there's \$500,000 available for that. That's now open.

We've also been working with TasTAFE, as the CEO mentioned earlier, through the deed of purchasing arrangement. There's been an additional \$2 million for TasTAFE for an Aboriginal pathways pilot program which is designed to provide extensive support to TasTAFE Aboriginal students, with a primary goal to prepare them for successful entry into a VET course.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, that's great. Can I just ask for a bit more detail on where you mentioned that you've got the 20 per cent loading that can be applied and that the expectation is that in private providers, that's either provided as a discount to fees or as extra support? Is it tracked how that is provided in each private provider that gets it?

**Ms PATERSON** - I need to take that on notice, through you, minister, if that's okay.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. I'm just wondering how we follow up to make sure that it is either a reduction in fees or a genuine provision of support that's required, that is meaningful in terms of the spirit and principle of the 20 per cent loading.

**Ms PATERSON** - Of course.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt had a question.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, thank you. I believe there was an answer to the question that I previously asked regarding the numbers of the skilled workforces. Thank you.

**Ms PATERSON** - Sorry, that was in relation to the migration figures?

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, yes. Sorry. I'll give you a moment to -

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes. So, the 1900 target relates to the reduced allocation from the Australian Government of 1850.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Right. So that wasn't in relation to 2025; that was the 2026-27 year?

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Okay. Yes. Is it likely that, for the 2860, or a number close to that, to be for next year, the 2025-26 - oh, that's the target for this financial year.

**Ms PATERSON** - Yes, yes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Makes sense. Thank you. Thank you for the clarification.

**Ms PATERSON** - Not a problem.

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Hiscutt, you asked previously in the TasTAFE hearing about pathways for young people.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, we've got Mr Hollingsworth here, who would love to talk through some of the Youth Job Strategy and youth jobs taskforce work.

**CHAIR** - Minister, that's my next question.

**Mr HISCUTT** - It was my question earlier.

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Hiscutt's got the jump on it, but it's certainly of interest to all of us because obviously young people having opportunities in this state is really important. So, before you arrived, Mr Hollingsworth, Mr Hiscutt asked about how we can sort of better support young people as they're sort of in school or considering leaving and going into vocational pathways, and particularly if maybe they haven't had a lot of experience in the past in some of those areas and how we can kind of support them to make their way straight.

**CHAIR** - Maybe, minister -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Can I clarify?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Sorry.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Sorry if I spoke through -

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**CHAIR** - No, you go, Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I was going to say, one of the concerns was the activity that sometimes the trades are seen as, if you're not academically capable, then, you know, go seek a trade. Whereas I'd really like to see that - we need smart tradies. Well, not to say that those aren't but, I mean, you know, there's also a capacity and an avenue there. So, what are we doing to support people of all academic levels moving towards trades?

**CHAIR** - Yes. And maybe rather than Dorothy Dix, I could just ask the question.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I was quite happy with that question that you asked.

**CHAIR** - We normally ask the questions on this side of the table. So, minister, just to carry on - to follow on from Mr Hiscutt about youth in -

**Mr ELLIS** - I think you're writing all this down, Stu.

**CHAIR** - Yes. About youth employment.

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Hollingsworth, I should say.

**CHAIR** - No, that's all right. So, I won't go into the preamble because you've already actually gone into a lot of that. I just wanted to know whether you can advise how the implementation of the government's Youth Job Strategy is going and what results are being achieved. You know, actually, have we got evidence of results, and if you just give some information on that.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Thanks, Chair. Absolutely. And thank you for the opportunity to talk about the Youth Job Strategy. And give me a kick if we start going on about this, because we're fairly passionate about this work, as I understand members are.

**CHAIR** - It's important, so thank you.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - And so, just to recap, really, the Youth Job Strategy - and I managed to dig out a copy - was released towards the end of September 2024. And we've been driving implementation at a pace that we can, but this is a big structural and challenging cultural shift in the way that - not the government and the different parts of government, but community, industry, line up their effort to make those pathways available, and all of them, to your comment, around the equity of access to university or vocational pathway - because, on that point, not only where the job growth is around those trade skills. Increasingly, our economy is needing a combination of higher-ed and vocational skills and capabilities, and the ability to adjust, pivot, in a changing economy is really important. There's national work here, and Ms Paterson is involved in some national work around tertiary harmonisation as a national agenda. This is really critical.

But in terms of here in Tasmania, what we're doing is, in partnership with the Department of Education, trying to ensure that that gap between school and into further pathways is smooth and the transitions are aligned. So, we have a taskforce that's supporting the work that has representation from all the education and training sectors, the community sector, jobs hubs and industry, to try and bring this together with Youth Voice as a key part of that.

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And we've made some real traction in the first 12 months or so, setting up some real foundational work with the Department of Education, and some of that Alex mentioned around the alignment of data and pathways and integration with vocational steps.

We've got a lot of momentum within regional areas with our regional jobs hubs supporting those pathways and that gap between leaving school and - well, unfortunately hitting the welfare system where the federal government gets in - the jobs hubs are finding a way to catch and support young people as they leave and transition from school, and their parents.

So, that's a really unique model, again, that we touched on before about how we can support all young people, make sure there's a point of connection, there's no wrong door to engage with an education and training pathway.

Some of the other key milestones have been the supporting of regional study hubs, both in Sorell, at the employment and training hub down there, and also in St Helens, at Break O'Day there. These are a combination of trade opportunities to connect those into our regions and make sure they're visible and available to young people there.

There are two other priority initiatives that we've been focusing in on, as well as a range of other programs, which I won't go through the detail of them; one of them sits with the Department of Education, but two are real structural projects. One is trying to establish a common and shared career framework for all 15- to 25-year-olds, no matter where they turn up - in the school environment, in a jobs hub, at a TAFE, at university, in a community sector.

**Mr ELLIS** - Even with their families as well.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Even with their families. A very plain English version of this, and we've been testing, we're actively testing that now, it's available on the Youth Jobs website to enable anyone to have a conversation with a young person about career opportunities and support them to connect to people who know the detailed mechanics of enrolling. And so, we're really keen and encourage people to have a look at that and provide feedback to make sure that that's fit for purpose. It is working and we're really keen to activate.

As the minister alluded to, the really hard part is supporting parents and enabling them to connect information and being very, very simple in the way you do that, and that's something that's quite a unique piece of work, we're being told, compared to what's happening in other states and territories. So, we're really proud of that. We've got some very interested stakeholders from the Australian Centre for Career Education, and we know that the Department of Education are building that framework into what it looks like in schools.

The other priority initiative is work we're doing through what's called a demonstration project. Our first demonstration project of scale is with Incat, and this is about working back from the jobs and opportunities to line up all the parts that connect a young person to a career conversation, to work exposure, to work experience, to work readiness, to a vocational qualification, through to engineering, because the job roles there are multi-skilled and we're really well advanced in that.

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And it's really uncovered some of these - just a lack of visibility of amazing work that's happening - and making sure that's lined up and coordinated. It's removing all the acronyms for employers and making it simple to navigate - what do you need? And we're working back to that.

The schools in the catchment have really leant into how can we be supported to engage in this way. Because we don't expect teachers to be experts in, every teacher to be an expert in VET - that's an unrealistic expectation - but to understand how they can get information about VET pathways or other opportunities that are not necessarily understood.

So, how do we bring that expertise in from a community and wrap-around perspective? We're learning a lot from that and we're drawing out some of those lessons in real time that are helping us unlock some of these just minor things that, with a little bit of effort and better coordination, could unlock this really well.

So, this issue is not unique as well in other parts of the country, but the fact that this is working across two portfolios is a really - is a bit of a game changer if we can continue to reinforce that focus around the young person, employers and how the two systems and the multi-systems actually line up to support those outcomes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I know how much my colleagues hate parochialism, but how much in the regions is that - you talked about - was it a pilot program or something? Is that within the schools throughout Tasmania or is there focus groups or what's the end goal?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - The end goal - we're trying to make sure that there's an evenness in terms of the support for schools, and in some of the outer regional schools, for example, around, you know, the smaller - Gretna and those - we're really finding connections that haven't been there before through the jobs hubs - partnerships with the Beacon Foundation, and they are a critical stakeholder in supporting this as well. So, at this stage the goal is to ensure that no matter where a young person is, they can get access to a minimum conversation and engagement to an opportunity.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I was going to say, the other thing is engagement with the workforce as well. I use my own experience coming from advanced manufacturing, I know the companies I was at were never - they're smaller level, but quite often the smaller level are the ones that employ a lot of people coming through. They've got a willingness to approach the Education department and be involved and give information, but until there's a connection made, that's hard to see. Is that an area also being looked at?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - A hundred per cent.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - And this is, again, what the advantage is of the jobs hub model versus traditional employment services.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

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**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Our evaluation said businesses are using this mechanism to learn. As you've mentioned, they don't know where to start. They don't know what they don't know.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - So, one of the key things that jobs hubs do is not just the job matching, but they do the support with those small businesses to kind of coach them, a bit of post-placement support. And we're finding that that very local relationship and making small micro-businesses feel comfortable and supported, and the right referral and someone to talk to in their community is really making a difference in terms of those opportunities taking and sticking.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - And we think that's something that is a very Tasmanian thing, too. Trying to actually strengthen that relationship and connectivity is something that we want to design for.

The other thing in our arsenal as well is the employer choice program. We're developing better workplace kits and tools that enable businesses who don't have big HR functions to get some tools, best practice, learn from peers, to employ from labour pools that they mightn't have before.

We're lucky enough to have had partnerships with Social Ventures Australia to do some really innovative work around rebuilding career ladders in larger businesses to support young people, not only entry level, but to stay and grow within their organisation. And so, we've had great success there and a number of iconic Tasmanian employers dip in with their own time and resources to engage in that work, too. So, it's really important we tend to that side of the equation, otherwise we're going to miss out on the opportunity to make those connections.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. I appreciate your passion that you obviously have for this, so thank you very much for that answer.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb.

**Mr ELLIS** - And Chair, if I can just quickly, I'll just table the Tasmanian rescue helicopter mission and hours data that we were asking for.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Thank you, minister.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, the question I had in this area is around mature age employment and age discrimination in this sort of space in this portfolio. And we can all note, I think, that older workers remain potentially an underused workforce resource here in our state, both across the public and private sectors, and unfortunately continue to experience ageism in both the recruitment and the retention stages of things.

The questions I had around that are: what specific actions is the government taking to address age discrimination in recruitment and retention and to support older Tasmanians who want or need to remain in paid work either as full-time or part-time?

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**Mr ELLIS** - There's probably a few areas sort of outside this particular portfolio, I suppose, but I'm happy to kind of talk through around some of the, I suppose, opportunities to support mature-age apprentices and how we're working through those sorts of various training opportunities. I might pass to you, Ms Paterson, if you've got some thoughts, or Mr Hollingsworth, through the jobs hubs.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - I can add something there, minister, and then Alex can add in her own apprenticeships. I feel like I'm on a roll.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm not so much looking for mature-age apprenticeships because I think that's probably still people who are in their midlife, potentially.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Any age, but yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm asking about older workers. I don't suspect you're recruiting many mature-age apprentices who are 65-plus, or 60-plus even, or whatever it might be. Yes.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Through you, minister. This is something that we again are really keen to activate in the labour market demand, making sure everyone's getting the opportunity to connect. And we've been having a number of conversations with COTA around this agenda and their 45-plus campaign and delivering some employer choice programs in conjunction with hubs to try and support employers to break down some of those barriers.

This is actually an area as well that the federal employment system sometimes lets down older people as well. And we saw in the data that was coming through our jobs hub, that older cohort is a lot that are connecting through hubs because they're not accessing other services.

**Ms WEBB** - Are they? Yes, right.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - And we've got some great case studies around how that's given, you know - helped a business problem, but also connected in some of those barriers. And so, that's another opportunity to connect and break through some of those and making sure that employers are having to think and break down some of those barriers and stigmas.

The other program we have is our Career Connector program as well that supports workers, particularly those who might be transitioning out of business disruption.

I understand there's some live conversations there at the moment, making sure that those people with all the skills and capabilities, and how we're making sure that those skills are recognised by businesses and that those barriers and discriminatory blockers are being removed.

**Ms WEBB** - What sort of specific programs do you utilise, or methods do you utilise, to achieve that outcome, though? What does that look like?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Well, a lot of it - there's large structural challenges that I kind of alluded to there, but it's about driving cultural change within businesses. So, that's the employer choice side, building awareness of some of these inherent biases and things that we do in working with businesses around that.

**Ms WEBB** - In a one-on-one way with businesses, do you mean, or through programs that you deliver broadly that are education programs, or -

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Both, where we can. And so, we've had programs where we're having one-on-one support - through the hubs, in a very, very personal coaching sort of way.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Through the Employer Choice Assist program, the TCCI, that one-on-one support for micro-businesses to ensure that they're being open to different - and removing those barriers. And then, they're some of the mechanisms we're deploying there, really.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I appreciate that sort of overview of that. Sounds interesting and sounds like it's being driven by people presenting and raising this issue with you in an effective way.

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Yes. Through you, minister. It is an issue we're trying to combat, and it's complex and it's challenging - but there is kind of other structural issues here, too, about some of the way in which the federal and the tax, welfare interface.

**Ms WEBB** - They work against it, don't they, in a way?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - And, you know, in terms of the impact on the participation rate as well. But we are involved in conversations nationally about exploring that with particularly philanthropic organisations who are trying to explore avenues there, yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - We often think of participation as statistically 18 to 65, but a lot of people have so much more to give and really want to be involved, whether that's full-time capacity for financial reasons or it's mentoring or giving back to the industry that they love and all that sort of thing. Sometimes, if you look too prescriptively at participation data, you can actually miss a whole story of people who actually want to come back in or be a part of the workforce in a way that suits them later in life.

**Ms WEBB** - We had some of that conversation earlier around police as well, did we not, in terms of people approaching retirement age.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we did.

**Mr ELLIS** - I just wonder, Ms Webb, I might look to Ms Paterson if there's anything further you wanted to add there.

**Ms PATERSON** - Thank you, minister, through you. It's quite interesting. I think often people find that the profile of VET students is a lot older than you would typically realise. In terms of the student count by age group in the national dataset, 22 per cent are between 30 and 39 years of age, 13 per cent are between 40 and 49, and 9 per cent are between 50 and 59, so a real sort of spread of older learners, I guess, in the funded training that we deliver or support delivery of.

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The Building a Skilled Workforce program that I mentioned earlier, which is open for existing workers as well as jobseekers, is really designed to support people to reskill and upskill into areas throughout their career, and I think we've seen some really wonderful examples of that through our training awards, national training awards.

The vocational student of the year last year was an older Tasmanian who has recently moved into a disability career and never thought, I think, before in his life experience that he would end up in that place. So some really, yes, great stories of VET supporting people to transform mid-life.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, that's positive. Has there been any thinking done, minister, around - there'd be operational efficiencies that are coming through across the public sector under this Budget and the likely transitioning out of work that some current public sector workers are going to be doing, whether there's been kind of a lens put over that in terms of an age group lens put over that, an age lens, and also a gender lens alongside that? Because I think both of those things are intersecting in some ways as well, given the largely - or the female-dominated parts of the public sector that are going to be affected. Has there been any work done around mapping what that's going to mean in terms of flow-on effects into our sort of skills and training spaces?

**Mr ELLIS** - Obviously, you know, we'd look to be responsive, and if people are looking to reskill or upskill - you know, noting that there's a lot of people with some great crossover skills in the public service who potentially will be coming back into industry at the moment, at a time where unemployment's relatively low in Tasmania - so, yes, we'd obviously need to work closely with that.

But I imagine the Premier and the Head of the State Service would be working through some opportunities there for people in terms of, you know, connecting into skills and training or what other job-matching services, for example, could be provided as people transition out of the public service.

**Ms WEBB** - Are we anticipating that there'll be a higher demand that may come through as a result?

**Mr ELLIS** - Higher training demand or -

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - There may be. We'd need to work through that. Obviously we train tens of thousands of people, so within, I suppose, the broader architecture, something that we view as manageable and something that we could support if people choose to go down those particular pathways. Then in a broader economy, because there are certainly some workforce shortages that businesses are seeing that, you know, there might be some really good opportunities for that job-matching to happen as well.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any further questions?

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**Ms WEBB** - No.

**CHAIR** - You're good. Mr Edmunds? Mr Hiscutt?

**Mr HISCUTT** - I'm fine, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mr Gaffney? We have no further questions. Just checking with you, minister, if we take a break now, do you have your people here, say, in 15 minutes for the next, or are they not -

**Mr ELLIS** - It's quite challenging in this next portfolio because we have -

**CHAIR** - No, no, that's fine.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. State Growth have multiple ministers they report through.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - I was actually going to note that we'll need to - if it suits the committee, just there may be some questions that we need to wait for people to come in and out of the room, as it were. If it's okay to go at 4.30 as scheduled, yes, that'd be appreciated.

**CHAIR** - Yes. It was scheduled to 4.45; we were having a break. So, 4.30, you'd be happy? You'd be comfortable with 4.30?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. We'll scramble them, and perhaps if we update you as we go and see what we can do.

**CHAIR** - Yes. All right.

**Ms WEBB** - Of course, the other part of it is external people have had that time advertised to them, so sticking to time is probably preferable.

**CHAIR** - Yes, it is. Just for anyone who's watching, hopefully we will recommence at 4.30, or it may be 4.45 as scheduled. If you could stop the broadcast, please.

**The committee suspended from 4.02 p.m. to 4.45 p.m.**

## **DIVISION 11**

### **Department of State Growth**

#### **Output Group 1.1**

Office of the Coordinator-General

**CHAIR** - Welcome back, minister. We now have the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources. If you would like to introduce your team at the table and then do a short overview before we launch into questions.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair, and appreciate your colleagues' understanding. We do have quite a number of different staff. There's a lot of moving parts to this portfolio. Currently at the

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table we've got Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary of the Department of State Growth; Dennis Hendriks, Acting Coordinator-General; Michael Mogridge, Deputy Secretary, Economic Development; and Vanessa Pinto, Deputy Secretary, ReCFIT and Resources.

I've got an opening statement, but it covers a range of different portfolios, and we've only got an hour, so I'm happy if you just want to ask some questions and -

**CHAIR** - All right. That's fine. Are you right, Mr Edmunds?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, sure. Thank you. Thanks for all being here. I've got a question. I might start with implementation of the Queensland model when it comes to the coordinator-general. Obviously, a couple of years ago, it was sort of red hot as a political topic, and I'm just wondering, as part of the 2030 Strong Plan, how that progress is going around adopting some of the powers that the coordinator-general has in the Queensland jurisdiction and what or which of those are advancing.

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. The Office of the Coordinator-General has been a really excellent innovation as far as investment attraction, but we think that there's some more opportunities for them if given greater powers like we see in some other jurisdictions, to be able to really help to drive economic growth by pulling a range of different levers. I might pass to the team from State Growth or directly to the Acting Coordinator-General, if you want to talk through some of the work there.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Thanks, minister, and through the minister. It's probably worth noting some of the work that's actually being undertaken at the moment through the economic diversification and investment strategy, but also accompanying that is the development of the Futures Act and the *Tasmanian Development Act* review.

All of those are sort of interconnected, and as part of those activities, we're actively working with the Department of State Growth, who are developing some of those and leading that activity that we're working with to try and work through what some other jurisdictions are doing and what actually makes sense for Tasmania in a Tasmanian context.

A number of those states have adopted legislative acts that have different powers under different circumstances in relation to all sorts of things, including activation of land, but also in other ways. It's early days in respect of that, but it's a work in progress.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - So it's probably more at a still embryonic stage in terms of development. It's not like we've already done *x*, *y*, or *z* on that front.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Yes, no.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. No worries. Another one that was spoken about was the single permit - forgive me, I've got so many tabs open at this time of the week. It was announced on 9 March 2025 that the government would establish a single permit process for new start-up small business as part of its red tape-busting reform agenda, and I believe that was committed to be in place by essentially Christmas 2025. I'm interested in where progress is around that single permit legislation.

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**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Edmunds. I think this largely sits with the Attorney-General with his various different hats on. I'll just look to the team if there's anything further that they wanted to provide an update on from our perspective.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Through you, minister. I can briefly speak to that. The Deputy Premier, through the Small Business portfolio, is supporting that program of work.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Unfortunately, I missed the Deputy Premier this week.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Consultation has recently closed in relation to the model that was proposed in the first instance. I think that the government is now going through the process of, by way of the 300-day commitment, developing a pilot model off the back of the feedback in relation to the single-use permit, and there's a commitment to have an understanding of that model by 19 June.

That should really be exploring the feedback and getting a sense of how do we simplify business entry for new businesses starting up in Tasmania. Whether that ultimately ends in some firm legislative reform or actually just a policy lever to drive efficiencies, that's what's being looked at.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - One of the challenges certainly I face, I had a small business in my electorate that was trying to get an alcohol permit, which they applied for prior to Australia Day and only recently received this month. This question, by its very nature, is difficult because when I was making enquiries about that, I started with Hospitality and was then guided to the Treasurer's office, who then guided me to the independent statutory officer, and so it was very frustrating to not be able to advance that.

I'm just interested, and perhaps you might not be able to talk about all the challenges, but how you might look to those rigid things, how you can get a single permit to actually sit over the top of something that even just one facet of that took half a year.

**Mr ELLIS** - As you mentioned before, largely in the Deputy Premier's space, you mentioned before around some of the reforms that the Treasurer's undertaking, but I'll just see if there's anything else that we wanted to add from a State Growth perspective.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Just very briefly, through you, minister. Just to say that the ultimate objective of that reform is to streamline exactly that situation, and in part the consideration might be information provided to government once and once only, and then that is internally used across all of our regulators so that we are driving efficiencies in that respect; but also contemplating how can we develop, as a whole of government, an efficiency in relation to providing more of a concierge service around some of these regulations. That's part of the thinking.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - That's really encouraging. I hate to think that there'd be more subcommittees and things like that created than are necessary, particularly when we're talking about reducing this sort of stuff, but is there any kind of time when all the ministers who have a touchpoint in this or the secretary, or probably both, are ever in the same room to hammer out some of these challenges, like we were talking about in other portfolios, when you might have some really essential information that's not trickling through to the key decision-makers?

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Is there ever a time when we've got the Deputy Premier, Treasurer, minister Ellis here going, 'Well, this is all the feedback that we've got to achieve your end'?

**Mr ELLIS** - We regularly talk about opportunities for red tape reduction and those sorts of things. In terms of a departmental coordination mechanism, all that sits with yourselves, Treasury, and CBOS, it would be fair to say.

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. There are a number of mechanisms where heads of agency can get together and work together. There are various committees. The significant one is the Secretaries Board that meets on a regular basis and talks about issues that are cross-agency, cross-portfolio, and work comes out of the Secretaries Board that might spin off into just a small group of secretaries meeting and working through an issue.

Then, of course, there's just a general working practice of where, if there's a couple of agencies that need to work together on something, heads of agencies will just get the relevant people in a room and work through that, but that's just business as usual.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Is that occurring around this policy?

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Through you, minister. It's something we'll be stepping through once we have a proposal.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Once there's a model.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Yes, that's right. We certainly look forward to doing that.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Appreciate the answers. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - I just have some of those overview ones. Do you mind if I ask them while we're on this?

**CHAIR** - No, no. That's fine.

**Ms WEBB** - It's a bit more general, and it can relate to the area of the Coordinator-General's office but also just across the portfolios, minister, if I might ask those ones that I've already put to you on other areas. In relation to this portfolio area, external consultancies used, perhaps that is worth breaking out into each area because it's probably going to be relevant separately in each area.

In the Coordinator-General's office, I'm looking for breakdown of the total number of external consultancies used in the 2025-26 financial year, including any still underway, and the quantum of costs associated with each of those consultancies.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - I do have the quantum.

**Ms WEBB** - The total, but can you break it down for me against each one? If it's easier to table an actual, physical table, that's fine, too.

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**Mr HENDRIKS** - What we've done is we've grouped it by consultants, professional fees and contracted services. The total amount is \$161,785. In terms of consultants, we've narrowed that down to \$10,835. That was in relation to some work done around the Liberty Bell Bay site but pre-administration.

In terms of contracted services, there's a number of, I suppose, contracts in relation - mainly associated with the Cradle Mountain project and the master plan development, and also some work in a project around TasNetworks work. I think that was in relation potentially to SunCable and some of that. And then there's also some work, like with the Tourism EOI probity advisers and the King Island Dairy.

**Ms WEBB** - So, is that able to be provided to us in a table way?

**Mr HENDRIKS** - I can take that on notice, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Thank you. That'd be great.

And then, looking ahead, and in the context of operational efficiencies being brought in through this Budget, is there any use of consultancies that you had planned that may need to be adjusted in light of efficiencies and cuts being brought to bear?

**Mr HENDRIKS** - It certainly is something that we haven't really given a lot of consideration to at the moment, but we will do that as part of the sort of overarching changes.

**Ms WEBB** - It's an area that could be considered as part of that - in that space?

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Yes, absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - The other area that I'm interested to talk about in an overarching sort of way is around any particular digital infrastructure projects that you've got on foot at the moment in this area, if there are any to report on. I'm just asking each department because it's an area that's an interesting one.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Yes, certainly. Obviously we are working with companies like Furnace and those sort of projects. Not so much digital infrastructure, though.

**Ms WEBB** - I mean more internal.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Sorry, within the office. No.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, within the office. No, that's fine.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - No.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Then I've got a question on the actual line item, too. I can come back to it, if you like.

**CHAIR** - Okay. All right.

I was going to ask, with regard to Boag's, obviously it was really disappointing to hear that Lion was closing down the Boag's manufacture in Tasmania, and particularly for northern

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Tasmania. Did Lion raise with the government any options to keep the facility operating? If so, what was the outcome of those discussions? Also, just wondering whether the Office of the Coordinator-General has any avenues to try to find some facility to actually take over that area. So, a bit of a double question, through you, minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, for sure. Yes, I couldn't agree more, Ms Armitage. Very disappointing, and just - our hearts go out to all the workers particularly affected.

**CHAIR** - Forty-two workers.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, and the people in the supply chain as well.

**CHAIR** - Families.

**Mr ELLIS** - It's really been an institution for the northern part of the state. So, Lion reached out to government in recent days, but it was more to notify that this is a commercial decision and one that they are committed to taking because, particularly with just the changing market and changing demand for the product, so ultimately a decision that they've made and that they're firmly sticking to. But I'll just look to Mr Hendriks if there's anything further you want to add.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - And certainly from the perspective of the Office of the Coordinator-General, obviously this has only sort of played out over the last couple of days, but we're actually very keen to get involved in that project to see what we can do in terms of both the site and sort of what happens next.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Clearly, there's a lot of work that can be done, and we're very keen to actually engage in that.

**CHAIR** - Yes, it was very disappointing because their profit margin really hadn't dropped overly, but it was obviously just that - a bit like South Australia when they closed that down within a week's notice. Much the same.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, and the West End Brewery is an interesting example because that's actually turned into a really major revitalisation project for South Australia, I think a billion-dollar project. So, obviously everyone's still processing the decision that's been made and there'll be a time to work through some of the big-picture future opportunities. But yes, there may be some opportunities that present themselves that look similar.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Can I ask a follow-up on that?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Yes, of course.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I'm interested. So they, as part of the announcement - and I know it really pales into insignificance when you think about how iconic Boag's - certainly the first legal beer that I've had was a Boag's. I remember it. And probably the first illegal one was, too. And I'm not making light of it, it's just ingrained in the whole state, really. That million dollars

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that they said they'd pay back, is that just into general revenue? That's where that is intended to land.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, the Premier's announced today that we're quite keen to work with the local community on reallocating that money specifically to related work, and that'll be - there'll be design that we'll need to work through that. There's a range of different options that may be available to the state government in consultation with the community and how we best land that. But I think it's a good outcome that they've decided to pay that money back and then for it to be reallocated to specifically this challenge that we're having there. I think that's the right approach.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - And like the skill set that is now - yes, okay.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes. Cool.

**CHAIR** - I have to say that I have had an email today from one of the local councils to say that a beer tourism future opportunity for that million dollars might be good - a northern Tasmanian beer trail, basically going from Launceston to Burnie. So, maybe we need to forward that on to the Premier.

**Mr ELLIS** - And that is part of some of the changing mix. So, if you think 10 years ago there was virtually no brewing on the north-west coast, so everyone drank Boag's, obviously, and a few imports. Maybe they drank Cascade in the privacy of their own homes, who knows?

**CHAIR** - Not many.

**Mr ELLIS** - But whereas these days there's Island State Brewing, Buttons Brewing, Communion Brewing, and even in Launceston -

**CHAIR** - Seven Sheds Brewery, Wandering Trout Brewery, Little Green Men Brewery, Boag's Brewery, Du Cane Brewing, Little Rivers Brewing and Iron House Brewery, which could all be part of the northern Tasmanian beer trail if the government was to provide that million dollars to the north.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, I suppose in many ways what that is to say is, while it's a really challenging time for the people who work there, there's also been changing tastes and some of that kind of drinking from breweries that are small family businesses in Tasmania has become more of a thing again.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - So, the strength of our brewing and wine sector, spirit sector, is really going from strength to strength while we're having this challenge, particularly with Boag.

**CHAIR** - Anything we can do to help the workers, I think that's what it comes down to, any employment opportunities that can come up for the workers.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, exactly.

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**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. And it has been good to see that Lion has made some significant commitments around its workforce. So, that is at least pleasing to see, that they're going to be supported in what is a difficult transition.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I'll just go. Mine is a pretty straightforward one, I think, in terms of a fundamental area here. I'm interested to explore the status of the expressions of interest process for tourism developments seeking access to the state's national parks, which I think we all agree are unique public assets for our state and the Tasmanian people. The first question is: how many EOIs have been assessed by the EOI assessment panel in the last 12 months, and how many have been approved to progress?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Ms Webb.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Through the minister. I believe that there's one in the last year, one new project that's come through. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm looking for the assessed and then the approved-to-progress number.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Approved to progress.

**Ms WEBB** - One for one? Okay.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - I think it is one for one.

**Mr ELLIS** - And Chair, I'll just introduce -

**Mr HENDRIKS** - So, two have been received. One has been -

**Mr ELLIS** - All good.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Sorry. And one has been assessed, sorry.

**Mr ELLIS** - Do you want to come up, Andrew, if you want? Yes. You're welcome.

**Ms WEBB** - Bring another body to the table.

**CHAIR** - Do you want to introduce?

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Andrew Crane, who's Project Director as part of the Office of the Coordinator-General.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Welcome, Andrew.

**Mr CRANE** - Thank you, minister. Thank you, Chair. Minister, through you. So, the panel's received two applications, or expressions of interest, in the past 12 months. One of those has been assessed thoroughly and has been approved to progress. The other is still formally in the assessment phase. The panel has made a determination and a recommendation that's going through the normal ministerial and probity processes at the moment.

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**Ms WEBB** - Okay, so still in train. And following on from that, then, how many EOIs that have been approved to progress have commenced the RAA process in the last 12 months?

**Mr CRANE** - So the commencement of the RAA process is a matter for the Parks department.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Mr CRANE** - So the Reserve Activity Assessment process -

**Ms WEBB** - Once you've approved to progress, they're off your books and off your hands?

**Mr CRANE** - So, the process of the tourism expression of interest panel is the first gate, if you like, in the development of those proposals. Once the panel makes a recommendation, that recommendation is made to the minister. The minister then makes note and recommendation to the Minister for Parks to progress. The Minister for Parks then makes that determination, and then that process is carried through by the department.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. Right-oh. Perish the thought that we have a connection and be able to report back on that at this point in time. Couldn't possibly breach silos, could we?

**Mr ELLIS** - We can follow up on the particular data. It's more just in terms of what's available to us.

**Ms WEBB** - What data you hold. Yes.

**Mr CRANE** - Can I just also add that that information is publicly available on the website.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. The EOI process has now been operating for 12 years, I believe. And perhaps this is - and correct me if this is not correct, but there's been nine EOI projects which have been successful in starting commercial operations, ultimately, out the other end of it. Granted, the front end of it is the responsibility of the Office of the Coordinator-General, so reflect on that part of it. In terms of what actually comes through to the other end, it seems like a fairly minimal success rate in looking at those numbers, potentially.

Is the government looking for the departments involved and the areas involved to achieve any operational efficiencies in this space and potentially even remodelling or reviewing this particular EOI process, even in the face of deeming it underperforming even?

**Mr ELLIS** - Obviously, sensitive natural areas, all that sort of stuff - it's important that where there is development that we're getting it right. From what I understand - and prove me if I'm wrong - I've got data here: estimated full-time equivalent jobs created, 207 jobs, and an estimated project investment of \$99 million. Anyway, some really good opportunities there, and often in high-value areas. I'll just pass back to the team from the OCG if they want to add anything further.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Through the minister. And my understanding - and Mr Crane will tell me if I'm wrong - 74 tourism EOI proposals have been submitted, and seven are operational.

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They've created 58 jobs and generated \$31 million in investment. There are, though, in terms of the projects that are in the EOI process, the expectation is there would be significant investment and jobs that would flow once some of those come through.

The reality is a lot of those projects do take time and there's a lot of complexity to actually get them from concept through to - even through the EOI process itself there's a significant amount of work that is there to be done. I should also say that the Auditor-General, in his report - I think it was in 2020 - indicated that it is quite a robust process and -

**Ms WEBB** - Noting that the Auditor-General did report back in 2020, is there any intention to do a further independent review or some sort of process to check in this far down the track of whether this process continues to be the right process here, particularly if we're at a time when we're looking at operational efficiencies and we're looking at how we're organising things on a whole range of fronts across departments?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. As you mention, your original process, we've actually just recently had a parliamentary committee process as well. Yes. Certainly, something that's been looked at, and we're always looking for continuous improvement, but I'll look to OCG if there's anything further.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Yes. No, we did have that parliamentary committee hearing earlier this year to go over some of the changes that had been made. There is a continuous improvement process that is undertaken, and we do make changes over time to try and actually refine that process to make it work well.

A good example is how we now update the website, to do that in a much more timely manner so there's more transparency that people can actually see what's taking place. It is a bit of an ongoing process to try and make sure that it is current, up to date and reflective of what needs to occur.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thanks. Yes. And I know we've got to keep moving, but just a detail sort of question about overseas travel. Obviously, there's been interest in that around the Office of the Coordinator-General in years past. I was just wondering if you'd be able to provide a quantum of how much money has been spent and a list of where we stayed for overseas and interstate travel in the last financial year, including the length of the stay, the number of guests or travellers, and the reason for the trip. Happy to put that on notice if you like, or you can come back later in the hearing.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - I can certainly talk to some of that, but we will probably need to take elements of it on notice.

**CHAIR** - It's a rather involved question, so -

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Sure.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I'm happy to just put it through. If you've got an answer before we finish, that's great. I know we've got a few things to get through.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Just looking at the performance information in book 4 on page 79, has the investment facilitated by the Office of the Coordinator-General 2023-24 at 476, and 2024-25 at 430 this year, totalling quite low, and next year's target also below that, what's the rationale behind the target you've set for investment facilitated by the Office of the Coordinator-General? Through you, minister.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Through the minister. The target in terms of investment facilitated we set every year, we have that conversation with the minister, taking into account, I suppose, what's happened previously and some of the expectations around that, and it's then set in for the next year.

**Mr HISCUTT** - It's just a lowering there. I'm just wondering if there's a trend there to -

**Mr HENDRIKS** - It normally goes up. I think it's 450 next year, I believe.

**Mr HISCUTT** - It's 350.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - 350, sorry, to 340.

**Mr HISCUTT** - That's lower than the previous two years and I just wanted to know, because I would have thought, also, that you would expect progressively more investment, would be the aim, and I'm just wondering what's gone into setting that goal to be lower than previous years.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Sorry, my understanding is it's gone up, but it may well be that there's a -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Typo.

**Mr HENDRIKS** - Certainly our expectation, too, is that in terms of the investment facilitated, so that at the end of this year we're getting very close to actually looking at what it's been over the last year, and our expectations are that it will be significantly higher than the actual target set.

**Mr HISCUTT** - You'll exceed the target here and hopefully aim higher in the next budget. Something to note to check back because the target in the book is lower than previous years. Thank you. Thanks for the answer.

**CHAIR** - Do we have any more questions on the Office of the Coordinator-General? If not, if we could move, minister, to 1.2 Industry and Business Development.

## **Output Group 1.2**

### Industry and Business Development

**CHAIR** - If there's anyone else to come?

**Mr ELLIS** - We're okay for the time being.

**CHAIR** - You're good? No? Thank you. We'll continue, and with Mr Gaffney.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you, Chair. When I looked at this output it has quite a number of aspects to it. And for those listening elsewhere, it's support services and facilitation to industry sectors; manufacturing and defence; the Antarctic sector through delivery of the Gateway; client engagement; international programs; financial assistance; Client Service Model; Australian Government and telecommunication carriers - and there's a level of 12 different aspects, so it's huge.

And then I go to the output and I was a bit surprised. It looks like there's some efficiency. For example, the 2025-26 estimated outcome was \$46.878 million. If you extrapolated that over the four projects, that would be \$188 million, but the total is \$37 million. So there's been a decrease of \$151 million over the forward Estimates in this thing. And because, I think, the efficiencies for the whole of State Growth is \$264 million, that means the greatest percentage has come out here.

I just want to know, how is that going to be resourced, what's happening to this section and where does it get picked up in this new model? That would be my question. I didn't go into specifics because I just thought there'd be just too many. There's probably a range of answers of where those efficiencies are coming from, but more importantly, where are they going to be picked up in other line items or by other areas?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. And the current numbers more reflect a high number of - or a high dollar figure of flow-through grants to different organisations and things like that, which you commonly see in this portfolio. But I'll pass over to the team from State Growth to talk further.

**Mr GREGORY** - Yes. Thanks, minister, and through you. The budget papers reflect some provisional allocation of operational efficiencies. You'd appreciate the Premier's announcement of the 'State of the State' around the machinery of government change occurred smack in the middle of the budget development or even towards the end of budget development. And the operational efficiencies that were announced, the 250 FTE and the \$250 million specifically around machinery of government change, because of the timing of that, they haven't been put into the outputs in a great level of detail.

They're in there as provisional allocations. We need to work through the machinery of government change, and that's quite a significant piece of work to restructure State Growth and move a number of pieces out and looking for efficiencies along the way. That's a six- to 12-month process. Right at this moment we can't say, well, that's exactly going to be here or there, and I would expect that some of those provisional allocations will also change as we work through that process, though. Basically the answer at the moment is we don't have that level of detail to be able to point to exactly what's going to occur in each output.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That was the issue I thought would be real in that. But I suppose what I'm most concerned about, or we're all concerned about, is all of those aspects of this output group, 1.2, Industry and Business Development, all of those responsibilities would be picked up elsewhere as we move to this new model, so the Antarctica, you know, all that sort of thing.

And that will come back to us - in five, six months' time, will you have worked through that and said, 'Okay, that one there, the Client Service Model framework going forward, that is now somebody else's responsibility, and that will be by this group, or - do you understand what I mean?

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**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. The broad allocation of functions from the current Department of State Growth into other agencies has been determined, so the functions of this group will move to the Department of Premier and Cabinet. That's where they'll reside.

The Department of State Growth changes into Building Tasmania and all the other components move out over sort of the next six months or so, so that's where this portfolio lands, is in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It doesn't change what I said before in terms of there's still a lot to work through and understand where the operational efficiencies will, in fact, land as we work through that process.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you. My next and final question is to do with Industry and Business Development as an example, and we've talked about Boag's just a second ago. When I spoke to the Premier on Monday, we discussed the Nichols Poultry and its 160 workers, and farmers had invested millions, and we had the discussion.

He said to raise it with you, and then not long after we had the announcement by RAMP Tasmanian Poultry, which was good. And I figure it's a Geelong-based company started in 2018 by Brad McAuliffe, and he was a plumber, too, interestingly.

I suppose the question would be, have you been involved with this deal in terms of offering government support and grants in the same way as Liberty Bell Bay, and are there guarantees or commitments that the workers in contract with rearing farmers will be no worse off with the new owner?

I suppose, are we taking what we've done for Liberty and what we've done for other groups and implanting that same sort of sense of responsibility to something like Nichols chickens, or have you had conversations, or will you be having conversations with RAMP about how that's going to impact on its farmers and workers?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. It was a really good outcome with the sale process. That was done through a standard administration process. We've got to remember that there are thousands of businesses across Tasmania, and the level of work that's happening with particularly the major industrials is not necessarily replicable across the rest of the economy.

They have a special strategic significance to the state, being a small state with very large users of electricity and very large economic output compared to our economy size. This has actually been a process that has been a commercial process with a commercial outcome, and so that change of ownership has been something that has really been delivered by the administrator.

We've had conversations with TasFoods previously, and, of course, you know, we'll continue to work with RAMP as the new owners. But, yes, this has been a much more typical kind of corporate process. But I'll just look to the team from DSG if there's anything further that you want to add.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Minister, I think you summarised that well. I think, yes, certainly we're looking at those broad strategic issues in the context of major industrials, but you've identified, yes, the market forces and - yes, nothing further from me.

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**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you. I would like to think that somebody would be looking over that to make sure that, for the people in my area, in my patch, the north-west coast, the farmers and that, that's a very important business and organisation, whether it's a major industrial or not.

We need to make certain that all of its workers and farmers are guaranteed, or as best they can, to be able to be involved in the work they've undertaken, because they've spent, you know, millions of dollars upgrading their farms and facilities for Nichols chickens.

**Mr ELLIS** - We couldn't provide a guarantee on individual employers or individual suppliers for businesses across Tasmania. The major industrials do have a particular scale that makes them sort of cornerstone businesses, but, yes, ultimately it'll be a commercial decision for RAMP.

We hope they'd meet their obligations and be good corporate citizens, invest in the future of that plant and the workforce and the broader supply chain. But, yes, that's much more of a normal commercial process, just like we've seen, you know, with small and medium-sized businesses right across our economy in Tasmania each and every day.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**Mr MOGRIDGE** - Minister, if I could just add, the team at State Growth have directly engaged with TasFoods on this, so it's not to the exclusion of businesses per se, it's just, I guess, how we're understanding the strategic versus the local and just working through those problems. So, we certainly have engaged directly with TasFoods.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you very much. That's all from me.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If we have no further questions on this line item, we'll move to 4.1 Forest Policy. Minister, do you need to change?

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes. We might bring a few more people to the table.

**CHAIR** - If we could just stop the broadcast for the moment, thank you, while we just do a bit of a swap-over.

**The committee suspended from 5.21 p.m. to 5.23 p.m.**

### **Output Group 4.1**

#### Forest Policy

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. We will now be on 4.1 Forest Policy. Did you have something you wanted to say before Mr Hiscutt starts his questioning?

**Mr ELLIS** - Just to introduce, I've got Sarah Russell, but I think she'll be Dr Sarah Russell. Is that right?

**Dr RUSSELL** - Yes, according to my mum.

**CHAIR** - Mothers know.

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**Mr ELLIS** - I know. My mum is a doctor as well, but she's like, 'I'm actually a professor'. Anyway, Dr Sarah Russell, Director of Forest Policy. You may have some other people who will need to be called depending on the questions.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Thank you. Mr Hiscutt.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. I'll start off looking at the appropriations. The revenue from appropriation from this line item drops off an absolute cliff, nearly 80 per cent. Is the budgetary allocation in the forward Estimates sufficient for the FPA to rigorously execute its current functions?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Mr Hiscutt. We can bring the FPA, the Forest Practices Authority, up to the table as well. There's the forest policy side of things. FPA is an independent statutory authority. But I think the secretary outlined before there's some provisional allocations that we've got, because the department itself won't necessarily exist on the other side of the reforms, and then there's also some flow-through payments that make up that number. But I'll just look to the secretary if you want to provide some further detail.

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. I think it is the same process of working through provisional allocations, but the team can also talk to some specific programs that come to an end that impact on the forward Estimates.

The other comment I would make, which we made in another committee, is I'm sure you'd all appreciate that when you get out into year 3 and 4, you're in a space where perhaps the programs - new programs - haven't been committed to yet. In my experience since - well, the last 15 years - dealing with, for example, the capital program, it used to quite often look a little bit anaemic out in the floor, but that certainly gets filled out as you go on.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I guess, of course, the concern with that is that the estimated return to surplus also gets affected by that statement, but anyway, I'll move on from there.

**Mr GREGORY** - Yes, true.

**Mr ELLIS** - Mr Hiscutt - well, for the committee as well - I have Anne Chuter. She'll be Dr Anne Chuter, Chief Forest Practices Officer of the Forest Practices Authority, as well.

**Ms PINTO** - Through you, minister, I might just start from a budget perspective for the output group just to talk a little bit just to talk a little bit to the honourable member's reference to dropping off under the policy area. There's a number of initiatives that are coming off, one that's coming off in this current financial year, which was an initiative for 650 for the forestry, future growth and innovation pathway, and - sorry, \$650,000. I'm short.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Yes.

**Ms PINTO** - You know what I'm meaning?

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. Yes.

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**Ms PINTO** - Thank you. And prior budget initiatives that are also ceasing over the forward Estimates, so we have the on-island processing program, which has had a round already undertaking. It's got a second round that's going through into 2026-27, and then funding ceases from 2027-28.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Is that per year?

**Ms PINTO** - That's \$3.284 million in the current financial year, and then there's just over \$1.034 million in 2026-27, and then there's also an extension of support to the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board, which is \$192,000 per annum, and that is in this current financial year, next in 2027-28 and then it's not from 2028-29. They're the primary fixed-term initiatives.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I guess the question, through you, is: is what is there in the following years enough to do what's required of that division?

**Ms PINTO** - Reaffirming the commentary from the acting secretary a little bit earlier, there have been provisional allocations across output groups, and what the next few months we'll be doing is looking at what is needed across those policy units to ensure that we can deliver critical outcomes for government. That's the next step that we'd look at.

The other comment I would make is, you made reference to the Forest Practices Authority, of which I will let Ms Chuter respond a little bit more about how the FPA operates, but I'll just bring your attention to page 268, because it does get a little bit confusing between what goes to output groups and then what goes to grants and subsidies.

The Forest Practices Authority, you'll see, receives an administrative payment from government, and you can see its funding is continuing into the forward Estimates and is indexed, yes. Through you, minister, I'll just refer to Ms Chuter just to maybe give a little bit more outline of the operations of the FPA within the budget it's got allocated.

**Ms CHUTER** - Thank you, and through you, minister. Thank you for your question. The Forest Practices Authority administers the *Forest Practices Act* and our government appropriation goes to certain aspects of that process. It's mainly around the compliance and enforcement aspects of the *Forest Practices Act*.

The government appropriation will pay for our monitoring and compliance functions as well as those enforcement and regulatory investigation functions. It also goes into aspects such as adaptive management, improving our standards, reviewing our Forest Practices Code and ensuring that we have a contemporary forest practices system in play.

Beyond our government appropriation we also have self-funding revenue as well, which is funded through forest practices plans that are paid for by industry or users of the forest practices system, and that sort of funding goes to more of our advisory services, so making sure that we've got specialist staff that can provide advice on how forest practices plans are assessed and implemented, and it goes to aspects such as research and effective monitoring.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Thank you for that. Just following on from that, I have heard of instances, and one in our patch in the back of Ulverstone, where a - and I'm not great with the acronyms, but I think the forest practices plan - the person who created the plan was also the same person who was auditing the plan and also the same person who was making sure the

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plan was adhered to. Do we have governance around that to ensure that - you know, it doesn't sound like a great system in that instance. What's the process there, or could you speak more to that?

**Ms CHUTER** - Through you, minister. It's a co-regulatory system, so we have a number of trained and accredited forest practices officers working throughout the state. There's about 163-ish officers at the moment. Those people have powers that are given to them by the Forest Practices Authority, and those powers can be to monitor forest practices plans and forest operations. They can also be delegated responsibilities to certify a forest practices plan. Actually, under the legislation, anyone can prepare a forest practices plan, but only a forest practices officer with delegated authority can consider that forest practices plan for certification and certify it if they so choose to. So, they do take on compliance functions through this co-regulatory system.

However, the authority also has an independent audit program, so we audit a percentage or number of forest practices plans each year to ensure that those standards are being met. We also have a number of other functions. We have a code of conduct or a standards for conduct for our forest practices officers to ensure that they abide by that conduct, and when they are certifying forest practices plans they are doing that on behalf of the authority. We also have obviously our enforcement investigation process as well. So, if there is a matter that's raised, the FPA itself will investigate that matter and apply enforcement through our Forest Practices Board.

**Mr HISCUTT** - But to confirm the fact that the same person who does create it can accredit it?

**Ms CHUTER** - That's right. Anyone can prepare a forest practices plan. However, when certifying a forest practices plan, the authorised officer, in accordance with the standards of conduct, must assume the role of the Forest Practices Authority itself, so essentially -

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes, and as you say, it's audited.

**Ms CHUTER** - Yes, that's right.

**Mr HISCUTT** - No, just to understand that I did understand that correctly. Thank you.

**Ms CHUTER** - Great.

**Mr HISCUTT** - You said there's a code of conduct, but that would rely on some of the reporting, I imagine, to that; I mean self-report or an investigation as well. I have heard - and look, I'm not confirmed on this - but that the forest practices plans were readily available on the list. Is that still the case? Through you, minister.

**Ms CHUTER** - Yes, through you, minister.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes.

**Ms CHUTER** - Yes, there is still limited information on forest practices plans available on the list.

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**Mr HISCUTT** - Thank you. Thank you. Sorry, I'm just getting the order of my questions. To you, minister, there's obviously a lot of uncertainty at the moment with what's happening federally. I'm just wondering if you've sought advice on whether the conduct of the negotiations for the future plans is financially prudent or not.

**Mr ELLIS** - Do you mean for the contracting?

**Mr HISCUTT** - Native forest. Yes. Yes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Yes, sure. Yes. This is obviously something that we're working through with Sustainable Timber Tasmania. They're obviously not here, but will be available as part of GBE scrutiny. But certainly, having led a delegation in Canberra with the industry and with STT to discuss the potential for a bilateral agreement to be struck between Canberra and Tasmania so that we can continue our system and continue forestry in Tasmania, we've certainly had some really strong assurances about the quality of our regulatory system, particularly our independent Forest Practices Authority, which Ms Chuter leads.

But the broader model that we have, that applies across tenure, so people who grow trees, but also farmers looking to do land clearing and other sort of land developments, traditional forestry on public or private land. There's a whole range of people who are affected by the uncertainty that has been created by the federal government's quite knee-jerk and ill-advised changes, I've got to say.

But they have been much more cooperative with Tasmania and giving some good indications of the progress. They're listening towards striking a bilateral agreement that would certify and accredit our system of forest practices, so that's encouraging.

There are, of course, some safeguards that we've needed to work through as well, and STT have taken that into account as they continue the contracting process, including fundamental change clauses and things like that. It's important to get the balance right, because forestry needs certainty. Trees take 30, 60 years to grow, so you need to be able to deliver a system that provides certainty. A mill or a contractor, they've invested in trucks and lines and equipment, so similarly they need certainty.

For us to deliver certainty with the industry, they need commercial certainty and they need regulatory certainty. We're looking to deliver regulatory certainty with a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth, and we're making good progress towards that, and we're looking to deliver commercial certainty with signing contracts, STT contracts, with the various different millers in the industry, and we're making good progress on that as well.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Obviously there's other parties involved, so you can't give a guarantee, but do you have any timeline you're working towards with getting those agreements in place?

**Mr ELLIS** - In terms of the EPBC, the certification, the drop-dead date is effectively 1 July 2027, so next year. If a bilateral isn't signed by then, we'll be back to the nightmare scenario of the 90s, when, you know, every coupe, every land-clearing operation on a farmer's property is on the federal minister's desk. That's not the way to run these things.

This is a landscape-scale process where typically trees are regrown. We need to get a bilateral in place by 1 July 2027. I'll pass to Ms Pinto, maybe, to outline further on that. And

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then we're working through STT, but that's probably more something that we can share later. Thank you.

**Ms PINTO** - Yes, thank you, and through you, minister. To the committee, the minister has outlined the importance of this to the state. What I can say is that we've been successful as a state in negotiating a position, because under the EPBC Act, there is a number of pathways that a state can achieve an ability to be able to operate in this environment, and probably the optimum position for us as a state is to negotiate a bilateral agreement. Effectively, what it does is it reaffirms our regulator, being the Forest Practices Authority, and our forest practices system as being not just the regulator of forestry requirements but also the regulator under the Commonwealth environment act.

It only will be as of next week that, under the EPBC Act, the Commonwealth is legally required to gazette a notice of intent to enter into a jurisdiction. They have provided in writing confirmation with the minister that they will be gazetting that intent. That'll be happening as of next week.

In terms of a little bit more detail about timelines, we've got, actually, a team. The three of us here and a number of others are doing a journey to Canberra just next week. We're deep in what I would call the benchmarking and discovery phase.

We have an internationally renowned forest management system. It has a number of components to it that start from the governing legislation all the way down, in addition to the key components that are embedded within the Regional Forest Agreement, of which the CAR reserve is a really crucial part of that agreement.

**Mr ELLIS** - Comprehensive, adequate and representative.

**Ms PINTO** - Thank you, minister. That's excellent. Thank you. What we are looking to do is we're going through almost quite a deep-dive education exercise with our counterparts in the Commonwealth. Predominantly, I'm talking about the Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water. I might've had that in the wrong order. I'm so sorry to my colleagues over there.

We'll be working really closely with them to take them through our system to demonstrate the robustness of our forest management system and how it will be able to apply the national environmental standards that form a part, and are currently in development and approval stage at the moment, that will form the basis of validation for them as the governing body.

**Mr HISCUTT** - That sounds promising. Thank you.

**Ms PINTO** - We're working very stringently to that timeframe, and as the minister said, yes, it is all about ensuring that is established in readiness to provide certainty to the industry and certainty to Tasmania for what is a really important part of our economy and for our regions and jobs.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Absolutely. Minister, does the government or your view feel it appropriate the public doesn't have any access to the valuation of the products sourced from the public estate?

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**Mr ELLIS** - We've actually been looking to do more work on this in terms of some data disclosure, because there's a really good story to tell when it comes to forestry and STT's value that they generate. When we have our GBE scrutiny, we can provide some further information on that, but suffice it to say, it's the wood products, whether that's sawn or other forms of wood products; there's the value that they provide in terms of firefighting capability, recreational and tourism access, in the road network, bee-keeping access - a whole range of other things.

We think that there's more data that we can share there that provides a more comprehensive assessment of the value of forestry from the public estate and then, more broadly, the overall value of forestry is about \$1.2 billion a year to Tasmania. It's a huge industry in our context and a really strong and profitable one, as well, because one of the other things is that more than 50 per cent of Tasmania's forestry is private. That's people making investments in the future of forestry because they can see that it delivers a return as well as provide some great land management outcomes as well.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Yes. I think it's just one of those things within especially community angst, because figures get thrown around all the time. It'd be great to, on occasion, be able to say, 'This is what actually happened here', and refute some of those potential figures.

Just talking STT, and this is from a budget line item, so I'll ask it here, and tell me if it's not, but I just noticed their line item is consistent. This is their grants and subsidies, and I'm asking this question off the hip because I didn't have it prepared, but it doesn't escalate over the forward Estimates. Is that usual, or is there not escalation allowed in that space?

**Mr ELLIS** - That's pretty typical for the CSO that we provide for STT. They are a very efficient provider of fire services in particular for Tasmania. Again, without the STT team here at the table, the cost per hectare of firefighting services that STT provide is a fraction of what it costs us to provide firefighting across a similar area with an equivalent agency, so Parks. Part of that is because the model of forestry is one that's based on land management. That's core business to what they do because they need to protect the trees for 60, 80, 100 years.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Does that mean that the escalation's not there because they're becoming more and more efficient at it, or is that just how that -

**Mr ELLIS** - They're certainly becoming more and more efficient. We were talking before, as you probably remember, about the AI fire cameras. That's an STT project and, certainly, they are a very efficient provider.

Obviously, future budget process, that'll be something that we always work through, but yes, they are an excellent partner in terms of our three key partner agencies for fire. I'll just look to anyone at the table who wants to add anything further. It's STT, so we've got GBE scrutiny later in the year.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Happy to move on to other questions. I'm satisfied with the answer.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we don't have a great deal of time with that. I'm sure we can have a few more minutes.

**Mr ELLIS** - Anything we need to table while we've got three more minutes left?

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**CHAIR** - I'm sure we might take another five minutes. I don't think that will hurt.

**Mr ELLIS** - I think we could.

**CHAIR** - Just a quick one on the forest policy: minister, I'm sure you're aware of the farmer concern across the state re the approach of the Forest Practices Authority in its regulatory function, which I understand has now prompted the government to announce a formal review of the regulations because of concerns that family farms are being penalised and strangled by red tape. Has the review started? When is it expected to be completed, and will matters of culture within the authority form part of the review?

**Mr ELLIS** - Review of the regulations - I announced it the other day, and we'll be working through that process. We'd expect in the coming weeks there'll be a publicly available portal where people will be able to provide their feedback in terms of the regulation because we have a nation-leading forest practices system, but we're always looking for opportunities to improve.

There are some complexities to it, even complexities when it comes to regrowing native species and those kinds of things. I appreciate the frustration from farmers and wanting to work through it. I won't comment on the particular case that came through, but certainly, we'd be looking to work through that process and be looking to finalise it in the first half 2027 in terms of the new regulation.

I've got to say, broadly speaking, the FPA do wonderful work. They are a key pillar of what we do, the independent nature of that process. It is important as well, when we're talking about threatened native species, that those are protected in the appropriate way, and I've got strong confidence that the FPA perform that job really well. It's probably more a question of are the regulations still working for farmers and others, and we've laid out key principles that we're very interested in hearing from farmers and other foresters as well.

We want to make the regulations even more user friendly: on the first instance, get the balance right for farmers looking to manage their property; secondly, cut red tape for private growers, particularly when it comes to native and plantation; and then, thirdly, we think there's an opportunity to deliver some election commitments for the special species sector about access to product across multiple land tenures.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - I'll just to look to Ms Chuter if there's anything further that you might want to add, broadly speaking, around the FPA regulations.

**Ms CHUTER** - Thank you, minister, and through you. The FPA, when we do investigation enforcement, we do build our protocols around the regulation triangle, which really focuses on training, education, and awareness of the standards as monitoring and assessment before we get to fines and prosecution.

As an example, year to date, we've had approximately 160 enquiries received by the FPA which have resulted in 63 per cent of advisory informations. That's where we send out information about what the standards are and how to apply them. We've formally investigated 37 per cent of those, of which five have resulted in prescribed fines, four to the DPP, but we've

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also managed to negotiate agreements for long-term rehabilitation under forest practices plans for seven of those matters and agreements to enter into conservation covenant for one of those matters. We do focus on awareness, education, understanding the standards, and also rehabilitation and restoration as our primary focuses.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr ELLIS** - Chair, just while I've got it, I've got some questions on notice from TasTAFE.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I think Mr Hiscutt had a really quick one, but it'd have to be very fast, because I've just got one question on MRT, with the indulgence of the table for five more minutes.

**Mr HISCUTT** - Just regarding the percentage of timber processed in Tasmania and hopefully a quick answer on that, actuals are at 90 per cent and then 83 per cent. By 'process', is that either through a mill saw or they've been turned into chips before they're taken away? Is that what that means? We're saying nearly 85 per cent on average is being dealt with in Tasmania, because that's a figure - I hear a lot that it all goes away to be dealt with.

**Mr ELLIS** - On the public estate, STT looks to sell and deliver only to Tasmanian companies, processing there, but I'll just look to our forests policy team if there's anything further that they wanted to add to the response.

**Mr HISCUTT** - I'd prefer it to be a quick response that most of it's done on island. Thank you to clarify that. Thanks, Rose.

## **Output Group 4.2** Mineral Resources

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If we have no further questions on that line item, I have one quick question on 4.2: Mineral Resources. Do you need anyone else at the table, minister? You're fine?

**Mr ELLIS** - We might bring the Director of Mineral Resources Tasmania, just a lowly Mr Alastair Morton, to the table.

**CHAIR** - So he has a chance to be at the table just for a few minutes. Thank you. Welcome. Just a quick question.

**Mr ELLIS** - He'll be a doctor one day. I'm sure he's got the skills for it.

**CHAIR** - Minister, how is MRT and the government working with Hellyer Mines to ensure ongoing compliance and the restarting of operations at that site?

**Mr ELLIS** - Thanks, Chair. I'll pass over to Mr Morton to talk through that process.

**Mr MORTON** - Thank you very much, minister, and through you. Operations recommenced earlier this year. We're obviously monitoring them closely. I could probably

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describe, at the moment, them being as substandardly in compliance with the requirements of the MRDA. Operations have resumed, and we're having productive conversations between us and the company in regards to what they're doing on site.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Just one other quick part: is there any concern about investor confidence in Tasmania's critical minerals and mining sector that you're aware of? Through you, minister.

**Mr ELLIS** - If you look at the Fraser Institute, which does the broad survey, Tasmania's really leapt forward this year in terms of the view of not only our resource, but our regulatory and business environment. Tasmania's got a very strong reputation globally, which is really encouraging. We need to continue to work to foster that and support it, but that's the overall picture. I'll just pass to Mr Morton, if there's anything you want to add.

**Mr MORTON** - Thanks, minister, and through you. The only things I would add to that point was that mineral exploration in the state this year was at record levels at \$49.7 million, which was really encouraging, so a lot of activity. To the minister's point, yes, on the Fraser Institute, which is a bit of a rating of investor confidence, we significantly jumped up those tables from 71 to 17. There's a lot of activity happening in industry, and confidence is high at the moment.

**CHAIR** - So, good news.

**Mr MORTON** - Good news.

**Mr ELLIS** - That's 17 of countries and sub-national jurisdictions as well, so each Australian state has - so for us to be effectively the 17th best state or country in the world, that's really encouraging, a testament to, obviously, the team at MRT and State Growth and that broader posture that we've had as a government of supporting mining, too.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I have a super-quick Minerals one? I restrained myself on the Forestry earlier.

**CHAIR** - No, that's fine.

**Ms WEBB** - It's in relation to Liberty Bell Bay, the ore supply loan that we gave. Additional to the workers' support things that we did as well, we did have that \$20 million state loan in August last year, \$14.5 million of which was used to buy the 23,000-tonne shipment of ore.

I understand that in January this year, Deloitte appointed the receiver to take control of that ore pile. Minister, what's the government's intention regarding that ore pile; is it considered an asset for the purposes of the current EY-Parthenon negotiations; and what security has the state got in place to ensure that the August 2025 loan will be recouped?

**Mr ELLIS** - It's less of a mining one because the ore was actually mined in the Northern Territory, but certainly the ore itself is the key security for the ore loan, which is part of the reason why we made the loan structure the way that we did.

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We obviously had very high-ranking security - the highest-ranking security - but for us to be able to secure that against a tradeable commodity that's able to be put back into the open market gave us confidence that we could proceed with the process, because as we mentioned at the time, there's not a loan to Sanjeev Gupta and the GFG Alliance. Effectively, it was a loan to the operations.

We've loaned on the basis of something that they would need if they were getting the operations restarted, and if that didn't happen, we'd have a physical, tangible asset that we could then resell on the open market.

**Ms WEBB** - Is that how we're going to recoup our money from that, then, or how is that going to work?

**Mr ELLIS** - As I mentioned, we've got security over the ore, which is, depending on the commodity price of the day, it looks like it might be worth slightly more than what we paid for it, so that's potentially a good outcome but depends on the timing. It's also available to be put back into the furnaces at the nearest opportunity for restart, which is part of the reason why the receivership happens: so that we could make sure that it stayed on site. Then we have security over the whole site. So, there's plenty of capacity for us to recoup those funds, but we're continuing -

**Ms WEBB** - So, when does that happen, and when will we know when that's going to happen?

**Mr ELLIS** - We're still working with potential purchasers in that process. We'll have a further update for the parliament and members of the community, but I'll just look to Shane. Is there anything else or, Mike, anything that I've omitted that might be helpful for us to add at this stage?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. No, I don't think so. The critical point is that the ore isn't at risk. We have possession of the ore. We have the options to sell it back onto the market and, as the minister said, potentially at a profit on what we paid for it. We also have the ability to sell it on to a new purchaser of the smelter. So, we've got a range of options available to us.

**Ms WEBB** - And it's understood that would be a sale to the new purchaser; it's not something that we gift away? That's the expectation?

**Mr ELLIS** - It'll be something that we'll need to work through, but yes, it's certainly something that's currently got security against it, and negotiations are ongoing with the administrator and potential future buyers as well.

**Ms WEBB** - We'll see where that lands. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Any other last questions? No. Thank you very much, minister, and thank you for everyone you had at the table today. It's been much appreciated. Thank you. Thank you to my team and to our secretariat and to Gaye on Hansard. At that note, I wish you a good evening, and stop the broadcast, please.

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**Mr ELLIS** - Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**The committee adjourned at 5.53 p.m.**