

**Wednesday 5 June 2013 - Estimates Committee A (Green) - Part 1**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

**Wednesday 5 June 2013**

**MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage  
Hon Ruth Forrest  
Hon Greg Hall  
Hon Paul Harriss,  
Hon Leonie Hiscutt  
Hon Tony Mulder  
Hon Robert Valentine

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**Hon. Bryan Green MP**, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Planning, Minister for Racing

**Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment**

**Kim Evans**, Secretary  
**Michele Moseley**, Deputy Secretary  
**John Whittington**, Deputy Secretary\*  
**Kane Salter**, Manager, Financial Resources  
**Wes Ford**, General Manager (Water and Marine Resources)  
**Kate Kent**, General Manager (Information & Land Services)  
**Lloyd Klumpp**, General Manager (Biosecurity and Product Integrity)  
**John Diggle**, Director (Inland Fisheries Service)  
**Deidre Wilson**, Director (Policy Division)

**Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources**

**Norm McIlfattrick**, Secretary  
**Bob Rutherford**, Deputy Secretary, Regulatory and Customer Services  
**Gary Swain** - Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Policy  
**Amanda Russell**, General Manager, Corporate Services  
**Stephen Long**, Manager, Resource Management  
**Tony Murray**, Director, Racing Services Tasmania  
**Tony van de Vusse**, Director, Office of Energy Planning and Conservation  
**Andrew Blakesley**, Director, Forest Policy  
**Graham Wilkinson**, Chief Forest Practices Officer  
**Tom Fisk**, Chief Executive Officer  
**Kim Creak**, Director, Mineral Resources Tasmania  
**Alex Tay**, Director Policy Reform Unit

**Department of Justice**

**Simon Overland**, Secretary

**Chris Batt**, Acting Deputy Secretary

**Chris Jacoora**, Department Liaison Officer

**Greg Alomes**, Executive Commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission

**Local Government Office**

**Phillip Hoysted**, Director, Local Government Office

**Greg Brown**, Director, Partnership Agreements

**Ministerial Staff**

**James Shevlin**, Head of Office

**Karen Vadasz**, Senior Adviser

**Cindy Hanson**, Adviser

**Alison Turner**, Adviser

**Erin Mahoney**, Adviser

**John Martin**, Adviser

**Pam Voss**, Adviser

**The committee met at 9 a.m.**

**DIVISION 11**

(Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment)

**CHAIR** - Minister, my apology for being late. Can you formally introduce the people at the table with you, please, and then we will commence.

**Mr GREEN** - Kane Salter is Manager, Financial Resources; Kim Evans is the secretary of the department and Cindy Hanson who works with me as an adviser.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything from an overview point of view that you want to comment on?

**Mr GREEN** - Primary industries is vitally important to our state and as Primary Industries and Water minister I am doing my utmost to ensure that we maximise the value of the industry and work to ensure that we give the industry a very good chance to continue to grow and expand.

We are committed to ensuring that we have a growing high value and competitive primary industry and food sector in Tasmania. We are doing our utmost to ensure that we keep our state relatively pest-free and disease-free. We are ensuring that we are leading the way when it comes to animal welfare standards and we are doing our best to ensure that we support world-class research development and extension in agriculture and marine and Antarctic systems.

The industry is a big one in a Tasmanian context. Tasmanian agricultural and fisheries industries are at \$1.7 billion or \$1.45 billion excluding non-food items, and the total annual value of packed and processed food of \$2.85 billion, so the importance of the industry cannot be underestimated from Tasmania's point of view.

Everyone would be aware of what we are trying to achieve when it comes to irrigation and at previous hearings of this forum we have talked about money that has been available for irrigation development in Tasmania and we are at the stage now where we are rolling those projects out and the flagship project that we have talked about for a long time is the Midland project and that is being built as we speak. As you drive between here and the northern part of Tasmania you will see

construction of that project under way. It is a \$104 million project.

The South Esk project, the dam has been completed and that will be filling as a result of winter off-takes. Other projects around the state are underway; the Kindred-North Motton is another good example. We are getting to the point where we have ticked off on Ringarooma, which is the next project to start, and we have the business cases in for the south-east which we have also ticked off on. Not every project that was initially on the drawing board will be able to be built because the Midland project was an \$88 million project budgeted, and it ended up being a \$104 million project, once all the engineering work was in.

We continue to work closely with TIER and we fund them to the tune of \$4.8 million a year. We continue our relationship with the university when it comes to marine and Antarctic studies and the new IMAS building is being built down here but we also have work going on at Taroona with research, \$2.6 million, and we are working to ensure that we protect our disease-free status by providing \$18.7 million to that part of the portfolio. Also, we are working to ensure that Tasmania has a contemporary system when it comes to land information in Tasmania. The land information system in Tasmania can provide all the spatial information that we need. I had a brief look at that recently, the prototype and the work that has been done so far and it is outstanding, and will be a very useful tool. We funded that to the tune of \$3 million. We have \$800 000 provided in this budget for the Spatial Information Foundations Project. It is a really interesting project.

A further \$1 million has been put into the budget to assist the caged-egg producers to transition away from caged-egg production in Tasmania. We have seen consolidation. In 2013-14, the consolidated fund budget allocation for the portfolio was \$61.17 million, including 55.05 of recurrent operational and 6.12 administrative funds.

Importantly, the primary industries and water department, certainly the parts that I am responsible for, are meeting their budget targets. It has not been easy for them and I appreciate that people within the department have found it difficult to work through the tough budget scenario that we have presented for them but they have been able to achieve that, so I thank all those people within the department for their efforts in that regard.

**CHAIR** - We will work systematically through the output groups so we will kick off with the Land Titles, Survey and Mapping Services.

## **Output group 1 Information and Land Services**

### **1.1 Land Titles, Survey and Mapping Services -**

**Mr MULDER** - In this particular area we all appreciate the amount of work that is going on and when we get things like the LIST and we have to use it and see how handy it is. I am wondering whether the revenue from the sale of products from that particular office is up to expectation.

**Mr GREEN** - Kate Kent is now at the table. Can you respond please, Kate?

**Ms KENT** - We have a few items around retained revenues, where we get to retain revenue from the sale of maps and mapping products, and also some of our survey services. The output information charges, I am looking at table 11.18, and the revenue around sales of maps and mapping products and generally they hold level. More and more people use digital maps now so the sale of paper maps has declined but we are always looking at new products and making more things available digitally.

**Mr MULDER** - I am trying to get a feel for how much money you are making and how that is

trending. Are we looking at the line-controlled revenue from appropriation?

**CHAIR** - You need to speak up too, please, Tony.

**Ms KENT** - In terms of retained revenue for sales and sales mapping?

**Mr MULDER** - That is what I am trying to get a feel for. What were our expectations and are they being met?

**Ms KENT** - We do not expect large growth in those areas because paper products will not retain their revenue. I am not sure if you are talking about those mapping products, or were you talking about land titles.

**Mr MULDER** - I was talking about the revenue coming out of your area, based on the development of the LIST. I recall it might have been part of the original business case for that particular project so I am wondering, over time, have the revenue expectations been met?

**Ms KENT** - They are in terms of retaining the revenue we get from property sales data.

**Mr MULDER** - I know there are fees and charges associated with it.

**Ms KENT** - Yes, small fees and charges.

**Mr MULDER** - So that is trending all right?

**Ms KENT** - They are trending all right, and we invest that retained revenue in maintaining that system and the products.

**Mr GREEN** - Do you want to add anything, Kane?

**Mr SALTER** - We do not have the specific breakdown of sales of maps and mapping products for output 1.1 - retained revenue of \$700 000 for maps as well as survey services.

**Mr GREEN** - Do you want any more detail on the breakdown of that?

**Mr MULDER** - No, I am not going to send you into that. I am more concerned about whether it is trending up or down. That was more the issue.

**Ms KENT** - As I said, sales of paper maps are trending down more and more because there is digital access, but demand for information online is increasing.

**Mr MULDER** - We will also go to a problem that has bedevilled the Legislative Council over the last 12 months. When we ask for maps of things like reserves, or when I asked for a map of a proposed road junction, we are always told they are difficult to produce because of the way the central plan register works.

**Mr GREEN** - The work that is being undertaken now, and the various overlays that are going over the land information systems in Tasmania will provide for much better options to produce maps. From what I have seen, production of maps will be much easier as a result of that process. We can provide a briefing for you on the money that has been spent so far and how the system is working. Whether that gets down to the details of a road intersection and being able to produce a map, we can certainly produce a proper vision with the appropriate overlays over a particular intersection. I had a look at the fact that existing reserves, et cetera, are all established and overlaid across the state and that will be much more useful.

**Mr MULDER** - It is more about how the LIST data is being incorporated into the central plan register. That is my concern because that is where it always falls over. They say, 'Sorry, this is the only format we can get. We cannot give you an A4 size printout'.

**Mr GREEN** - I see.

**Mr EVANS** - As the minister said the spatial information foundations project that we are undertaking at the moment will dramatically improve that. We are moving towards a system that is a bit more like Google maps, where you can go in and interrogate the data and add layers. We have, I am not sure, a couple of hundred layers, Kate, that we can now -

**Ms KENT** - There are 700 or 800 layers of information already in the LIST. Obviously, all of that is not accessible by everyone but the process is about making sure you can look at more and more of those layers over the top of each other. The issue you are raising about ensuring that other systems are interconnected is part of that process. Generally, our aim is to ensure all of our systems are becoming more streamlined and upgraded to deliver information more quickly.

**Mr EVANS** - As the minister suggested, a briefing and a demonstration of the work that has been done on this project would be really useful, because the work is amazing, and it will be enormously valuable for things like managing real time emergency incidents.

**Mr MULDER** - Which is why I was on the original business case panel.

**Mr GREEN** - And you will be really impressed. They showed me a few incidents occurring here and there, and they were all documented, in all areas.

**Mr MULDER** - This capability didn't exist about 18 months ago then?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, but for fire, police and other emergency services this will be invaluable and it is updated every 14 seconds. If there is an incident happening, it goes in real time.

**CHAIR** - Tony, is that discussion taking us down the path of what is set out on page 11.3 of the budget papers - the Spatial Information Foundations Project? Is that what we are talking about? Are we talking about the augmentation of the LIST and getting a broader range of capacity? Has the \$3 million you mentioned in the introductory comments been pumped into that?

**Ms KENT** - It is into its last year. It was an 18-month project that has stretched out to about 20 months. It will be completed in the first part of 2013-14. The common operating platform the minister was just talking about will go live at the end of June, as will the LIST map upgrades.

**CHAIR** - Can we have some more detail about that? The minister mentioned overlays and the like, and it sounds like a pretty robust project.

**Mr GREEN** - Everything you can think of when it comes to spatial information required for local government - even gas pipelines - has all been overlaid into the one map. All of the infrastructure, and real time data on the location of police and emergency services, are available. If they had this in place when the bushfires were on - even though we had relatively good control under the existing system, this is better. All road networks, agricultural forestry reserves, and infrastructure, et cetera - they are all available. It is quite amazing, and it puts us in as good, or better, position than anywhere else in the country.

**Ms FORREST** - You said the project will be finalised soon, but there will be some ongoing costs associated with maintaining it and upgrading it, and that sort of thing. In view of the comments you made about budget restraint, how is that going to be managed into the future?

**Mr GREEN** - To get the project itself to fruition was \$800 000. What are the recurrent costs, Kate?

**Ms KENT** - The project was capially funded, so it was \$3 million over 18 months to two years, and then we maintain it. Mr Mulder raised the issue of retained revenue - we use that revenue to maintain the systems we have in place right across the division.

**Ms FORREST** - While the property market remains flat your revenues are not as good as they have been, so this is the concern I have. We have a you-beaut, fantastic service here, but it is only as good as it can be if it is kept up to date. I need some assurance about ongoing support and funding for it, to keep it up-to-date, in tight budgetary times. Perhaps the minister can address his mind to that.

**Mr GREEN** - As Kate said, the revenue is allocated and we hope the property market picks up. There are signs of that happening now. I hope the broadening of the base of information available will broaden the revenue base and therefore allow us to make the whole thing self-sufficient.

**Ms FORREST** - It would be good to do that, but how will they raise revenue from this project?

**Mr GREEN** - This is a far more comprehensive set of data that local government can access. What are the payment arrangements, Kate? How do you pay?

**Ms KENT** - People pay when they get information off the list in terms of property sales data. So those arrangements will still be in place to do that where you are trying to access individual information on individual properties and that is through the payments of people paying now. Other information is available in the LIST that will be made available free; it is there for people to access that information generally, if you might go down to that property level transaction.

**Ms FORREST** - This is my point exactly, this is where people are going to head for the information. That is where I will go and if I can do it free, then I will do it more. If this is going to have an ongoing cost of maintaining and upgrading and whatever else is required in the coming years and not charging for the use, you will still need to get some LIST information about property sales. Things like that are hardly less than the federal increase but I don't think it is going to increase really quickly.

**Ms KENT** - What we provide is that core information; that is why it is called foundation and data; it is government information that is there to be made available. The business case that was done to set up the SIF, Spatial Information Foundations project, demonstrated that for a very small investment, such as \$3 million over the two years, that the use of that spatial information far outweighs that; it is multi-million dollars of value for government, industry and the community, and it is like other government services that we provide as part of our core business. In a changing world of technology where there people demand some things that you pay for on your iPhone and others that we pay click-through charges for and other things that are just provided.

**Ms FORREST** - We will develop an administration charge for that, perhaps?

**Ms KENT** - They are the issues that do get considered in terms of provision of information, so there is some foundation-based stuff, and then it is what is the other information that you can develop that adds to the value that you can charge for. That is the current environment that I think we are operating in. In general, nationally, all the other jurisdictions are in the same boat around what you provide for free and what you provide for a charge, and what you deliver as part of the foundation.

**Mr EVANS** - There is no doubt ongoing, we are going to need to provide for some investment and to ongoing maintenance of the system in order to keep up your vote. That is something we can

do through the limited funds we get through retained revenue from the sale of products. Most of the revenue from this division, for example, through the lands title system, goes back into consolidated funds, so we do not get to keep that. But we will need in future years through our normal budgeting to make an allowance or a reinvestment in ongoing maintenance and upgrades.

**Ms FORREST** - Has there been thought given to develop an app for smart phones?

**Mr GREEN** - You raise a good point. I would concede with the LIST when we first started talking about the LIST, that it was a huge whizz-bang and then eventually it did not meet contemporary standards. Now we have hit another peak, and there probably is something that we need to think more about in terms of updating and how we can bring in the necessary revenue to keep it completely contemporary so we will take that on board.

**Mr EVANS** - There is no doubt with the new environment that we are creating through this project, developers will be able to make apps and layer them on top of the core information that sits behind them and make it more accessible and useable by a whole range of people out in the community. That is the great advantage of what we are doing here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to this, obviously it may be a fact that people out there simply do not know that this information is available and therefore are not accessing it. I know that when I was on the Hobart City Council there was a relationship built up to provide amended information as time goes by with this. Is that relationship to global government, not just Hobart, still there? Do they maintain their components and then hand it through to you to be put on to the LIST or do they go directly to the LIST to do this? How does that relationship work? And I am presuming that they get free access as a result of providing information.

**Ms KENT** - We have a whole range of data agreements. With every bit of information that sits on the LIST we have an agreement on the data custodian around how we can manage it, what the transfer arrangements, what we do with it and how they have to upgrade and update it as well. So those relationships still do exist. We have a strong relationship with local government through the spatial council as well and they are heavily involved in a range of parts of the development of all of these processes. In this project we had a reference group that included people from right across government agencies but also local government and the GBEs; they have been involved in beta-testing the products and seeing whether they work and how they are applicable. All those data agreement relationships are maintained, and we will continue to update and re-visit them and enhance them as well.

That came up in the discussion around imagery acquisition, for example, which was one of the sub-projects of the SIF - Spatial Information Foundations - project as well. There was a consultancy done by Ashley Mahar of Geometry talking to all the stakeholders across the state and there was a clear message from people that they wanted to collaborate more on their acquisition of imagery; for example, the water corporations were a group that acquires lots of imagery and they are happy to then make it available or come to joint arrangements to make it available and make it more accessible. Again, the project has been part of developing that sort of relationship and partnership.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You really are facilitating well, aren't you, in a lot of ways, to all of the different players that are maintaining their data set.

**Ms KENT** - It is about that idea that a small investment by one group or organisation, for example, can have multiple value for others and not duplicating it by having one council do something.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thanks. I just wanted to clarify it.

**Mr GREEN** - It is useful information or not so useful, but 17.1 million pages were accessed

through the system, so there is a lot of access and that is up.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How are you promoting it so that people know that this information is available and therefore will pay to access it?

**Mr GREEN** - I suppose that is a good point. We have the board and the board has various conferences. I have spoken at a couple of those conferences where we have a former member -

**Ms KENT** - Gary Nairn.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, Gary Nairn is chair of the Spatial Information Council.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Have you managed to leg-ropo Telstra to provide their information? I will bet that is hard.

**Ms KENT** - There are layers of telecommunications information mapped on the LIST.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They do.

**Ms KENT** - There are lots of layers that are restricted access - some of Aurora's and Transend's and other information is restricted because of the critical infrastructure and there are many layers of that. The other part of the SIF was about trying to engage people that are beyond just what we would call 'spatial nerds' - the people who know about it now and do use it; it is about trying to have spatial information more widely used by people like us who are more policy people who would not have used it much previously. People in the social policy areas are taking it up more and more so this whole process, as Kim mentioned, is making the access to that information in that sort of Google-intuitive way that people feel more comfortable finding out stuff.

**Mr GREEN** - Why don't we have the briefing and have a think about that issue of advertising as part of that brief.

**Ms KENT** - We can certainly organise a briefing before the twenty-eighth, which is when it changes.

**Mr GREEN** - When it goes live.

**Ms FORREST** - Is that at the end of this month it goes live?

**Ms KENT** - For the LIST map bit and the common operating platform, and then the other bits come on.

**CHAIR** - In terms of logistics, before we come to Leonie, would that need to be on site, Kate, or here with the overheads?

**Ms KENT** - We did one with the minister the other night just with a laptop and a phone.

**Mr GREEN** - He used it off his phone.

**Mr MULDER** - Did you tell him where the police were at that time?

*Laughter.*

**Mr GREEN** - He cut it real quick - sports and then went home.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Following on from what Rob was saying, it is a great idea for cost recovery to



advertise it. Have you done any studies as to who pays? Is it the conveyance lawyers or is there another sector that you could direct that marketing to?

**Ms KENT** - We have information at the moment on who are the main subscribers who pay subscription fees and then the main users of the property sales data. It would predominantly be people in the property industry that are accessing it for their business, those agreements. That is information that again we -

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Advertising and targeted marketing would be a good cost recovery.

**Mr MULDER** - This tracks over the top of land titles. There is an issue that came to my attention some 18 months ago where a developer had bought a piece of land and the title appeared to be clear of easements and things. Then, when the development application went in, it was discovered that there was an easement across the corner of the land which basically made it almost unfit for the purpose for which he had acquired it. That easement was not on the titles plans so I am wondering what arrangements are in place to make sure that the titles information is accurate.

[9.30 a.m.]

**Ms KENT** - When people are purchasing properties they should complete property searches and identify what information is or isn't there.

**Mr MULDER** - The thing is that this easement was not mentioned in the title and it was not on the title plan, but when the development proposal went ahead to council - the GBE in this case was Aurora, it wasn't a water or sewerage thing. They came in and objected to the building because it was across an easement that they had on that land but that obviously had not been conveyed to the titles office. It is a question of data integrity, I guess, and what steps there are in place -

**Ms KENT** - We try to ensure that all of the property systems are matched and updated and have ways of having information relayed more easily on them. It's a historic paper-type system and we are moving to a digitised one. In those processes it's about trying to ensure that layers of data have been added or that they can be included. In most cases there is also case-by-case examples of where there needs to be clear searches of property information by the developers and the conveyancers as well. There are examples where there haven't been complete searches and that information probably does sit there layers down. These are more advanced systems that we are developing to help ensure that over time that information becomes much more easily found. It is there in many cases; we just haven't been searching appropriately.

**Mr MULDER** - Minister, from the policy perspective, I am wondering whether we need to get to a point where we have sufficient faith in the data so that if someone does come along and says oh, no, sorry there's an easement over there but it doesn't appear on the title, that the government is in a position to say well, that's bad luck to the authority or the agency or the GBE that failed to deliver the correct data to the titles office.

**Mr GREEN** - There is an insurance fund which is to compensate landowners for loss and damage or deprivations through the operation of the land titles office or under the act, which is the 1980 act. The process of admitting a claim against the fund of amounts under \$10 000 was found to be unnecessarily lengthy, preventing an applicant from receiving a payment of compensation in a timely manner, so an amendment was made to the Land Titles Act 1980 enabling the minister to approve claims under \$10 000.

It's more about reserved roads and reserved roads that appear on an old title and then disappear off the title and then come back onto the title. I found that difficult to get my head around, or to get a proper answer. I can see people frustrated; even though you write them a letter and say that there will be no road built through the middle of their house just because there is a reserve road going through the middle of it on one title that has been found at some stage. People don't want to believe

it and they feel nervous about that. I have found it difficult myself to get around it because there is so much old information out there. I suppose it's probably having the one contemporary set of titles that are the current ones -

**Mr MULDER** - That is the purpose of the LIST, isn't it, to centralise that data?

**Mr GREEN** - It is. But people seem to come up with them; it's amazing.

**Mr MULDER** - For someone who has had a quarter of a million dollar development stymied because of a something, to give them a \$10 000 compensation isn't really the point.

**Mr GREEN** - No.

**Mr MULDER** - The easement just needs to be adjusted so that the developer can get on with the development.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. Do you have any response to that, Ms Kent?

**Mr MULDER** -It's a policy issue really.

**Ms KENT** - In terms of ensuring that information data and ensuring that raw data existing on the titles?

**Mr MULDER** - Is there the potential in the future to include into this data the speed limits that apply to certain roads and the possibility of selling that on to GPS manufacturers. That would possibly be a lucrative area for you to pursue so that people could get our position on their GPS devices, the speed at which they should be operating, and then we can give them alerts when they are exceeding the speed limit.

**Ms KENT** - A business app that our Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources would probably be able to do. They would be the custodians of that data.

**Mr GREEN** - We get alerted on railway lines and hazards now.

**Ms KENT** - It is that sort of information that can be

**Mr MULDER** - And permanent speed camera sites but not random breath testing. I will move on from that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With the concept of a chain only as strong as its weakest link, the NBN - this system moves a heck of a lot of data and people will complain that it is too slow when it is going through a choke point. What are the plans? Have you connected to the NBN yet and is this system going to be connected through the fibre optic network?

**Ms KENT** - We assisted with the starting up of the start of the NBN through Aurora so we provided, through our Emergency Services GIS unit, the initial work for Aurora to help develop the GIS plans around where the NBN would go.

**Mr VALENTINE** - But a system itself operating over fibre, presumably there is no weak link, and with a heck of lot of data that is being required.

**Ms KENT** - What we tried to do in terms of when we are setting up the architecture for the LIST 2 is to ensure that we have the capacity to do what we need to do and where it can be accessed by people, that they have the capacity

**Mr VALENTINE** - But the service is running on a stronger -

**Ms KENT** - Yes, it has, we have had to look at storage and those sorts of issues and have those discussions with the Premier and Cabinet that set the whole of government agenda around telecommunications and other issues to do with it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We look forward to the new 'dial before you dig'. It will be, get on your iPad or your app, and get all the information and everyone will be tapping into it.

## 1.2 Valuation Services -

**Mr MULDER** - I notice the latest round of the councils have all had property values up?

**Mr GREEN** - May I introduce Warwick Coverdale, the Valuer-General.

**Mr MULDER** - My question is on the issue about the revaluations of properties which has a big impact on council rating regimes. We continue to have increasing valuations despite everyone telling us that the property market is flat and has levelled out. I am wondering on what basis we continue to up the value of these properties when anecdotally all the data says property prices are only creeping up, if anything, marginally.

**Mr GREEN** - It depends on the length of time between the last valuations. Part of the reason that we been having the review - Warwick gave me a briefing about this a couple of days ago on the latest round so I am happy for Warwick to give a snapshot of how he has seen the market over the last valuation.

**Mr MULDER** - That is a point. It is not like the market suddenly has dropped off in the last month. For several years it has been fairly flat.

**Mr GREEN** - All of the criticism in the past has been the fact that we had massively steep changes because of the length of time between valuations and we had very steep rising but that has flattened out.

**Mr MULDER** - I understand that there is regular review but that still has to be based on the market price.

**Mr COVERDALE** - We did do 10 municipal revaluations. They were dated as at 1 July 2012. The time period between these revaluations - and that is what you are seeing in the media, some are reporting it, some are not, but there is a six-year time period between the revaluations, so those levels of change that have been reported in the media are from 2006 to 2012. Within that period the market has changed and obviously the world has changed quite a bit.

There were increases in value from 2006 through 2007, 2008 and 2009 and even in some parts to 2010, so it has gone up and it has come back in many sectors. We have taken a snapshot of levels of value in 2006, which was the last revaluation for 10 municipalities. There is a snapshot taken in 1 July 2012.

Between that period it has gone up and it has come back. It is just that that snapshot in 2012 has shown increases in value since 2006 levels of value for certain property classes in certain localities. It is not equal across the board as to what has happened in each municipality or even in each town with regards to that.

**Mr GREEN** - Is there a mean line through that hump as a result of that?

**Mr COVERDALE** - If we talk AAV, I suppose between that eight out of 10 of those

municipalities have had changes between 12 per cent and 17 per cent. We have only moderate changes, if we are talking on an overall basis, though it is a longer time period that has happened in there. When we talk about from adjusted values in assessed annual value, in a lot of cases we are less than that. When I talk reval to reval, we are talking about a six-year period and a lot can happen within that.

**Mr MULDER** - The proof of the pudding is in the eating, isn't it. Is there any monitoring of the marketplace to see whether properties are selling at or below the government valuation?

**Mr COVERDALE** - That is what we do. We do adjustment factors for land every year and adjustment factors for assessed annual value every two years. In March this year we gazetted adjustment factors for those municipalities not subject to a revaluation. Sixteen out of those 19 municipalities have reduction in the adjustment factors showing a reduction in the property market within those areas. If you were to look at the adjustment factors for the non-revaluation municipalities this year, the other 19, there were decreases that happened.

**Mr MULDER** - If a house or a business property that you valued at, say, \$500 000 in your government valuation subsequently sells in the marketplace, are you going to have a look at the sales to see whether your assessed annual value is a genuine reflection of properties that did sell? It is a quality assurance thing.

**Mr COVERDALE** - That is right. We are doing adjustment factors on a yearly basis. We have to do estimated trends for capital value for the State Revenue Office as well so we are continually looking at where the market is. Each year we have to gazette adjustment factors to reflect on a property class and locality basis what changes have happened in the market. In commercial properties, we wrote back in the two biggest centres this year and a number of other categories across the board. There were significant write-backs this year.

**Mr MULDER** - I notice that your commercial properties in Sorell, for example, continue to rise in value, yet I am aware of a number of sales of commercial properties in the Sorell district that sold well below the government valuation yet the valuation still seems to rise. That is the point I am making.

**Mr COVERDALE** - This year we gazetted for the first time capital value adjustment factors because Sorell has gone to capital value. In the past we have been dealing more with land and assessed annual value on adjustment factors.

[9.45 a.m.]

This year I took the decision to look at whether there are capital value adjustment factors. That was for councils if they wanted to move over to capital value. Again, we then look at what we have on the valuation as at the date of the revaluation, what is the sale, what is incorporated in it, run through the process, analyse the sales and work out whether there should be a reduction. Behind every sale there are different circumstances and while it might show up on the list as some sort of reduction, there may be a reason behind that, or interparty or intercompany or various circumstances where we will say we are aware of those and that it is not reflective of the market. In certain cases where it is reflective, if that is the bulk of evidence within that time, we will reflect it.

I think that showed up in the adjustment factors this year around where we certainly had some significant write-downs on that for land value - in 15 and 19 municipalities, there were reductions in the land value adjustment factors. For assessed annual value, there were write-downs in 16 of the 19 municipalities. In capital value adjustment factor, there were reductions in 13 of the 19 municipalities. Overall, we are trying to reflect the market. We are spending a lot of time and effort on systems, and from my policy side trying to get to the bottom of this, more so than probably ever in the past, to accurately reflect as best we can what needs to be done from the statutory side. What

you are reading in the papers is changes from a six-year cycle and obviously there have been ups and downs within that. When we talk about adjusted values, it is a slightly different story.

**Mr MULDER** - When someone comes in and lodges an appeal or seeks a review of the value that you have given, how many of those appeals do you get and how many actually get you to change your mind?

**Mr COVERDALE** - I can go back to 2010–11 revaluations, where we issued about 9 000 properties. We had 1 692 objections as at that time, an objection rate of 1.9 per cent. That represented 1.9 per cent of total valuations issued; we received paperwork on those. We go through a rigorous process from that point where it goes back to the contractors for a review. They have documentation that has to be completed and it is a report that has to be filled out. They discuss it with the owner so it has to be the person of contact to get to the grounds of objection. In a number of cases the property will be re-inspected to view those grounds of objections, to try to work through that -

**Mr GREEN** - It is an improving scenario.

As the Valuer-General mentioned, in 2010–11 there were 1 692 objections; in 2011–12 weighed against 12 600 supplementary valuations, there were 40 objections and 62 per cent of these had an amendment to the valuation. To date in 2012–13, as a result of 6 243 supplementary valuations undertaken, there have been 22 objections. The percentage continues to drop.

**Mr MULDER** - In 62 per cent of cases where there was an objection, there was an adjustment to the value.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mr COVERDALE** - In general terms, where there is an objection -

**Mr MULDER** - We are hoping that is down.

**Mr COVERDALE** - That is right.

*Laughter.*

**Mr GREEN** - They hope it is down but then some people would be complaining that it is undervalued I suppose, wouldn't they?

**Mr COVERDALE** - I have said here before, I think, that there are three things that happen on an objection review: it either stays the same; it will go down; or it will go up.

**Mr MULDER** - Halved. I have to get my head around the concept to do it at auctions.

**Mr COVERDALE** - Interestingly, last week on Monday morning we had two objections lodged with the office. One wanted their values increased and one was putting it down. So I am not saying that people do not write in and say, for whatever reason, that they want their values increased.

**Mr MULDER** - The answer is that in 62 per cent of cases, I think, minister, you said, that in that year there was a revision of the value based on objections.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, correct.

**Mr HALL** - I appreciate where that is at, because if you talk to any real estate person, anybody involved in agricultural consultancy, land values are down 20 or 25 per cent, even if you can sell it - that is agricultural land. There is a significant move in the market, particularly in dairy farms and other places, which has knocked around some equities.

Can you advise the basis on which the Office of the Valuer-General was determining valuations for timber plantations, and whether there is any allowance being made by the office in the current cycle of revaluations for the dramatic loss of value of rural properties that have plantation timber on them, given that this asset is now virtually worthless according to the banks. We have that ongoing saga.

**Mr GREEN** - With the collapse of Gunns and the managed investment schemes?

**Mr HALL** - Yes. Has that been taken into account?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, we did talk about this briefly when the Valuer-General briefed me the other day.

**Mr COVERDALE** - Within the primary production categories in the 10 municipalities that are subject to a revaluation, you are right, not all categories of property showed the same type of changes. Properties that we had coded as forestry properties have showed reductions in each municipality, different to what has happened to the average of the other types of properties. An example is Circular Head. On our forestry properties we are down 22 per cent on those forestry properties and it ranges but it is up around that sort of number across the municipalities. Burnie was down 22 and Central Coast 24 on those types of properties. Doing a revaluation, there are a number of types of properties, from irrigation to dairies to forestry type properties, and we have -

**Mr GREEN** - When you say 'those types of properties' does that mean the properties that are completely over to forestry or perhaps have had farms on them -

**Mr COVERDALE** - That is the majority of what their production is or what the use of that property is. If it is a large dairy farm, it is coded as dairy if that is the majority operation.

**Mr HALL** - Some of them are combinations of agricultural and forestry.

**Mr COVERDALE** - That is right. The sales evidence, which is limited on the forestry side, showed reductions for forestry-type property, and that is what we have reflected in this revaluation. In the briefing of all the 10 councils, that was something that I ran through because when you have the average of the changing revaluations and you look at primary production, you have to be aware that forestry properties were down in comparison to other categories and class of agricultural land.

**Mr HALL** - Given that there has been a devaluation in both classes of land, plantation timber and native forest, then some people said that highlights the dangers of causing inequities and hardship using a capital-based value rating system - those people could be even further disadvantaged down the track.

**Mr COVERDALE** - I determine the values and I follow the market at a point in time. What the bases get used for from that point is for others to determine.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mr HALL** - In regard to the recent rate of valuation review, can you advise if any preliminary assessment conducted to ascertain that the current rate burden was distributed fairly across the ratepayer classes in that respect.

**Mr GREEN** - There is only one council that has changed with respect to the way they value, that I am aware of, and that is Sorell, which has gone to capital value. I was talking to George Town yesterday; they are considering going to capital value. Brighton has the flat rate. Central Highlands was but we have an adjustment -

**Mr COVERDALE** - Glamorgan Spring Bay, George Town, Brighton.

**Mr GREEN** - Other than those, AAV applies. I am not aware that there has been any challenge with respect to whether people are being rated fairly or not.

**Mr HALL** - There has been some continuing education from the government to local government on these potential changes -

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, there has.

**Mr HALL** - and the impacts they may well have upon their respective ratepayers.

**Mr GREEN** - As the Valuer General indicated, capital value has been assessed and made available at this time. The strong recommendation is that we move to capital values over time.

**Mr HALL** - There are concerns. People are coming in concerned, worried about the unknown or the changes, as to whether it is going to be capital value or AAV, and the rating of it and the impacts that will have on their business or their property.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - On the capital value, don't you believe that capital value impacts particularly on the elderly who may be asset rich but cash poor?

**Mr GREEN** - That is a consideration I have always had at the forefront of my mind when it comes to any rating changes. I have indicated that we want to move through this in a sensible way. I have been concerned about that scenario potentially existing. I have wanted to make sure that local government, when making these decisions based on the advice we are providing, is prepared to get out and run the argument as to why you would want to have capital values for determining rates on into the future. It is something we have thought about and talked about.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - How do you address that?

**Mr GREEN** - Various suggestions have been put forward but none of them are very palatable to me. It is an issue that needs to be thought through as part of the review.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The government is pushing capital value to the councils but there are a lot of unanswered questions you have not provided.

**Mr GREEN** - We have provided information to councils with respect to how they might want to rate into the future.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Encouraging.

**Mr GREEN** - The situation has changed. We have not seen the massive fluctuations in the values of property in Tasmania. For a period, every time there was a revaluation there were massive increases in the values of properties and therefore things changed quickly and it came as a shock to people. We shortened the time between valuations so that we took the shock out of the valuation process. The advice I have received is that capital value, land value, is the way to go.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Land value or capital value?

**Mr GREEN** - Capital value is the way we believe is the most appropriate.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Why?

**Mr GREEN** - Because it gives a fairer assessment of the value.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What about people's ability to pay it?

**Mr GREEN** - People are still going to be rated. It is up to councils in the end to make the decision about how people are rated and when they are rated. I can understand there is always going to be a person on the pension living in a very wealthy suburb that is going to find it difficult to pay large rates, which I am sure you would still confront that situation. Principally the best way, as has been determined, is capital value, Warwick.

**Mr COVERDALE** - Leading on from that, there are a couple of components to your question. Councils determine their own rating resolutions. A base is put forward, and they have three bases at the moment they can choose from, and always have had for a number of years. There were issues with AAV that showed up in 2008, when we had hundreds of percent changes in the property market, and also with the lesser increases in 2010. AAV cannot be less than 4 per cent of the capital value, so there were big shifts in properties moving on to the 4 per cent in 2008. Municipalities were going from less than 10 per cent to over 50 per cent. Kingborough, for example, went from 9 per cent and 76 per cent. At the moment, about 50 per cent of the properties in Tasmania sit on the 4 per cent rule so effectively half the properties in Tasmania are tracking on a capital value basis. That trend, when there was a change in the property market and more properties went on to this ruling, created a lot of difficulties for councils. That then led to part of the review. With so many properties now tracking on a capital value, a review seemed reasonable to determine if the 4 per cent rule is the best rating base continuing forward.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What do you think about land value? You can have two properties next door to each other, and one could be improved and the other not, but the land values will be the same. If improving your property creates a better capital value, with a capital value rating base you will pay higher rates. I have heard many real estate agents saying land value is obviously the way to go. What do you think about land value as opposed to capital value?

**Mr COVERDALE** - From my side, I will implement whatever the legislation is at the time.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Obviously.

**Mr MULDER** - Why isn't the minister doing it? That is the question.

**Mr GREEN** - It is a bit like water and sewerage reform. Local government said, 'We are all going to get out of the trenches together', so we got out and when we had a look around no-one was behind us.

*Laughter.*

**Mr GREEN** - Now I am cautiously working my way through.

**Mr MULDER** - Is that a reflection on your leadership, minister?

**Mr GREEN** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - Checking over your shoulder all the time.



**Mr GREEN** - We are still forging ahead. In fact, we said there ought to be one central organisation. It's no reflection on you, because you were not here at the time, but the upper House made a decision to have three.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Can we go back to land values?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, sure.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What is your opinion on land values?

**Mr GREEN** - The pure arrangement with respect to valuations would be land value, according to Warwick. That is the advice he provided.

**Mr COVERDALE** - I have worked with both and we are working with three values now. I have worked with land value in other jurisdictions. The report compiled by the Department of Premier and Cabinet runs through the advantages and disadvantages of all the bases and there are varying costs, advantages and disadvantages with each one. It can come down to which base you can move to relatively easily. For councils, it is obviously relatively easier to move to a capital value base and that is in the report, because so many properties in different municipalities are already on the 4 per cent rule - some up to 80 per cent. The report considered the merits or otherwise of land value, and the costs involved, and made some recommendations about shortening the cycle. We were looking at doing land value on a two-year cycle and a capital value for councils on a four-year cycle.

**Mr GREEN** - On that basis, I asked Warwick and the department to engage with LGAT as to how we move forward with the report and we have decided not to put anybody's arm up their back but allow us to provide the information for you, and for councils to make decisions.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Regarding the report in today's *The Examiner*, that the Aussie mortgage broker, Chris Antypas, said the government valuation system has little relevance in the property market and that bank valuations are coming in a lot lower than the government valuations. Have you any reason why a bank valuation would be coming in a lot lower than a government valuation?

**Mr COVERDALE** - It is all about a point in time and, while statutory valuations are effective 1 July 2012, that has been outlined to the paper a number of times, everyone is talking about the current date, the beginning of June, and the market can be different than it was when we were determining values as of an effective date. The further we go away from the revaluation date, if we step another year ahead - it is a six-year cycle so we can step ahead and you can move away from the statutory value sitting there and the market can increase or decrease during that time. I will not speak on behalf of the mortgage valuation side but the critical point is at what point in time these values are done. We are already a year past the effective date.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - There seemed to be some large differences and you can appreciate from someone selling a home, when someone goes to buy it and they have their bank valuation and that does not come anywhere near the price of their government valuation. Who is doing your valuations now? Is it a Tasmania firm that is contracted now?

**Mr COVERDALE** - We have three contracted firms for the 2012-13.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Are they Tasmanian?

**Mr COVERDALE** - Each firm has an office here, has staff here, and it is an interesting concept because so many businesses these days may have offices interstate or a head office, to say a firm is not Tasmanian, if it has real estate here, has staff here. They are a contracted firm with a Tasmanian base. It is not the case where someone is coming from Victoria and is brand new when they are on

the plane, and then they are out.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - That was the case a few years ago? When you did the review 10 years ago?

**Mr COVERDALE** - I have only been in the role since 2008 so in my time the valuation contractors have had a base in Tasmania, spent quite a lot of time here and -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Do they drive around? Are they doing it from Google? Are they looking down? I believe, originally, that they were looking it up, and some cases have come to you and have been changed because they looked at the overall size of a house and thought that is a huge house, not taking into account that a huge portion of it was a four-car carport, and estimating. Many of those cases have come through your office and been readjusted. I am wondering whether they are now driving past homes and looking at them, or are they still doing it from a remote source such as -

**Mr COVERDALE** - The requirement as part of the request for tender, for residential, is a minimum of a kerbside inspection. I have provided, and spent a lot of time and money putting together for the contractors, up to 50 years worth of data, which is the old field books, all the digital layers. They have on their laptop what I have access to so they are sitting at the same table as me with our data. While they are out in the field, they have all they need, in the municipalities they work in, to determine that property, which is a lot of information going back over a number of years.

We do supplementary valuations in between times so if there is a change - a garage, a carport is built, or anything changes to that property - the council notifies us, we go back out to that property and we pick up whatever change is there as at that time. We are continually in the background, updating the data. That gets provided to the contractor, we pick up some illegal improvements and bits and pieces throughout the revaluation process and then that gets changed. Sometimes through the objection process we get notified that something has changed through the property as well and we will have regard to that. Certainly they have now, in what I have been doing, a lot of electronic data in the field -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Accurate information on the households.

**Mr COVERDALE** - Absolutely. As at that point in time, that they have from satellite imagery to aerial photography to hydrography layers - and it is mobile, it is GPS, there is everything with it in conjunction with the loyal old paperwork. It is certainly the digital age in what we are doing now; we are trying to get better data with what we are doing.

**CHAIR** - Members, we will need to be focused. We have only until 11.30 a.m. on the whole of primary industries and we have a lot to do and we have spent a fair bit of time on these areas.

**Ms FORREST** - I notice in the forward estimates for the appropriation for Valuation Services, I assume that the 2013-14 increase is just a payroll tax reduction and the 2015-16 increases the 27th pay but we are not seeing much of an increase, in fact there is a drop, in the allocation to the Valuation Services. Is that going to present some challenges to the office? You have probably done some streamlining to the data you can use to undertake your work, and that more frequent valuations are now done has been a positive thing, but is that going to present challenges to meeting the requirements of the office?

**Mr COVERDALE** - How we sit at the moment, there was some additional funding provided in 2011-12 and 2012-13 which took us from a 30 per cent funded model to about a nearly 70 per cent funded model now. I still raise about 30 per cent of what I need through commercial operations so it is a smaller component. On the current cycle in what we are doing, without any changes coming out of the review or implemented, I am working on the basis we will continue in what we are up to.

**Ms FORREST** - So you are not concerned?

**Mr COVERDALE** - At this point in time I have put in the best measures I can to manage the human, physical and the financial resources available and every year I have managed that commercial component to date.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Most of it has been answered through other questions but there is just one: quality control of your valuations. Do you have a mechanism for checking on valuations that are provided to you by these third parties? I am thinking of things like if you take an area with older houses where they simply did not do the foundations properly, no damp course, there might be rotting foundations; someone next-door has gone through and done all the work on that so that the value of both houses look the same but really are not. I am wondering whether you undertake any quality control of the valuations that are handed to you, because they do not go into the property, they only drive past.

**Mr COVERDALE** - We quality-control the revaluations as they come back in. There are certain statistical checks we do as well as sending my staff out into the field to check the base sales; to check benchmark properties within submarket groups. It is a smaller jurisdiction here so I can send my valuation staff out to check a lot of the data and sample it. On an individual property like that where there is damp course or not, we may or may not know about that. We may hear of an objection to say that something is not right on that but we work within the data we have, what we have provided to the contractors. We try to make sure that each property class and each property is reflective of the market as at that point in time.

[10.15 a.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** - So it's a broader valuation on which people can end up basing their loans and all of those sorts of things. Their bank valuations would take this into account, more particularly, or do they do their own?

**Mr COVERDALE** - Well, there is a difference on that. We are in a mass valuations environment and that is the reality of what we do. Whilst there is a minimum requirement on the residential for a kerbside, and commercial industrial specialist and certainly rural to have the full inspection, the reality is that, for the money and the time, you cannot get within every property. To say that we don't track all the real estate ads and everything that's available and the photographs, we do keep a lot of data and it's building all the time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thanks.

**CHAIR** - We're done on that area, thanks very much Warwick.

### **1.3 Service Tasmania -**

**CHAIR** - We move to Service Tasmania. We had a discussion with the Premier yesterday about Service Tasmania matters so we'll be specific.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I will be very succinct. First, the areas of Service Tasmania that are covered by Primary Industries, so that I don't stray into areas that aren't yours, minister.

**Mr GREEN** - Well, Primary Industries is within this department.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Yesterday I asked whether, as a result of the changes in the review, there has been an increase in stress leave, sick leave and workers compensation. The Premier indicated that that was a question for you.

**Mr GREEN** - Okay. I have data on opening hours -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I can ask about that in a moment as well. I'm wondering if there's an increase of extra stress on people with the shorter hours and the longer queues.

**Mr GREEN** - I don't have the numbers in front of me for that particular area but Kate believes she can give you a number off the top of her head.

**Ms KENT** - My colleagues in DPAC mentioned that you'd asked the question yesterday.

No, generally there hasn't been an increase. We don't have all the figures in for the year. We were expecting, in a changed management process that one of the things that there would be an increase in sick leave but there is no indication that there has been. A quick look at our budget figures last night showed that in the months since the review was started on 2 January, when the hours took over, in fact the sick leave was down. In fact, for the first three months of this year, there were no short-term shop closures, which are often because there's an unanticipated taking of sick leave. So for the first three months of the year, none were closed.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - As for the actual shop and the opening hours, I believe that comes under you as well.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I did ask yesterday but I'll ask you again. With restricted hours, could there be some consideration to perhaps opening on a Saturday morning for people that either start work before Service Tasmania opens, finish work after Service Tasmania closes, have half an hour for lunch, work out of the city, or don't have access to get into the city? We all appreciate that Service Tasmania in Launceston is the highest customer base that comes in, and we only have the one. Particularly for elderly people it's very difficult to get in to Service Tasmania with the limited availability when you're standing for a long period of time waiting. I note that you have more online and more phones but I believe it's probably because Service Tasmania is open less and people can't access it. Is there any possibility of opening on a Saturday morning or opening a shop front perhaps in the northern suburbs?

**Ms KENT** - The service provision review was done. We gave a brief to the House members last year at the time the review was done. It was clearly around looking at what the transactional levels were right across the state in all of the shops and to ensure that we would keep all 27 shops open. To ensure that business was sustainable we had them open at hours when people used them. The transaction analysis showed that the hours could be reduced in terms of opening hours and by that way we could maintain the staff to be on the counters at the times they are needed. Indications are that, no, we won't be opening another shop in Launceston. I think the government has made that clear before and the board has no intention of doing that.

In terms of Saturday trading, the issue with is that there is no access to client agencies. Service Tasmania operates on a system whereby there are about 574 services that the CSOs are operating for, and systems are connected to other agencies that have the necessary information, like the Motor Registry in DIER. If the shops were open on Saturdays, there would be no back up system from those agencies to provide information. It was looked at in the very early years of establishing Service Tasmania, and it was decided it was not feasible or appropriate. Also, the costs would be prohibitive.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The other option that has been mentioned, and I am not sure you have considered, is allowing some of the local councils to take Service Tasmania payments. Has that been considered? I have heard it, and I am not sure whether it was from your department. This might give people who work out of the city more opportunities to pay their accounts. If someone cannot get into a Service Tasmania shop, how do they pay their bills, if they do not have access to

computerised banking, or if they do not have a credit card? It gets very difficult. It is called 'Service' Tasmania

**Mr GREEN** - That is right, but not that many years ago, it didn't exist. In context, the ability to pay your bills at a one-stop shop is much better than it ever was in the past. You had to go to various places to pay your bills.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - At least they were open.

**Mr GREEN** - You are making the point that it is more difficult now, but if you think back a decade, or however long it was, it was far more difficult. That is why Service Tasmania shops have been so sought after in regional Tasmania - because they make it so much easier to pay your bills, and buy your fishing licences and all those other things, like I do.

It needs to be taken in context - the system is much better than it was, but it doesn't fit every person in the community and their circumstances completely.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I accept that, but perhaps payments through local councils could be considered. Local councils already collect the fire services levy for the government.

**Mr GREEN** - And the Post Office.

**Ms KENT** - There are certain arrangements with the Post Office and with local councils. The DPAC side, that you spoke with yesterday, is the policy arm of the Service Tasmania model and they certainly have ongoing discussions with local government about with how they can deliver their services for them, especially for smaller regional areas.

**Mr GREEN** - We could raise that with the next local government council if you like - put that on the agenda.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - That would be good, but if you could get the figures on sick leave and stress leave that would also be good.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It has been raised before, I must say.

**Mr GREEN** - Has it?

**Mr VALENTINE** - It certainly has.

**CHAIR** - Nothing further on Service Tasmania.

## **Output group 2**

### **Primary Industries**

#### **2.1 Agriculture Industry Development Services -**

**CHAIR** - There are some significant matters here that we need to move on with, so, Greg, please.

**Mr GREEN** - At the table is Deidre Wilson, Director (Policy Division)

**Mr HALL** - I will start with the Agriculture Industry Development Services, and the first question I have is about the GMO moratorium - it is supposed to expire in November 2014. I asked a question in the House about this matter, and I got a fairly ambiguous response from your office. The question is: what is your intention with regard to the GMO moratorium? I understood there

would be an open and transparent review process, but it seems, from some of your comments recently, that you have made up your mind to extend the current moratorium without any review.

If that is the case I am very surprised at that because the report done by Macquarie Franklin that was commissioned by the government on this very matter, does not point to any advantages. In fact it points to disadvantages to the state since we have had the current moratorium in place. I would like to know where that is going and will there unequivocally be a thorough review of what is the current situation.

**Mr GREEN** - Democratic processes in Tasmania would ensure that any decision I made would be subject to review by this House and probably the lower House. The question was raised the day before.

I have had quite a bit of discussion with the department about this issue because I recognise it will create an issue from either side. In my own electorate I am talking to Greenham with their beef and their ability to market, particularly with the United States and their brand. No growth-promoting hormones and no GM has been seen by them as a huge marketing advantage and has really given them a boost with respect to their ability to market their product interstate. You hear that also from the wine industry, that they believe that the moratorium on GMOs in Tasmania is very important. Global Seeds have indicated the same; in their perspective it is something that they can market around the world.

I have attended plenty of meetings with the TAPG where they say the moratorium should be lifted because it is effectively holding back the whole farming sector from ensuring that there are more disease-resistant plants, which means that we would not have to spray as much which means that will have a positive effect on the environment. From a brand perspective, my position and the Labor Party's position is that we believe that the moratorium should stay in place.

There should be a transparent process with respect to the review. I am going to put a motion forward in the lower House to engage in a debate that in the end I expect will ensure that there is a joint House committee to look at the moratorium. I cannot pre-empt the decision of the parliament but that would be my intention. My expectation is that you and others from the upper House would be fully engaged as part of the process. Whatever the decision is it will not satisfy everyone.

In the non-food area, particularly poppies, advice from the highest level of the industry and those people engaged particularly with the markets for their product, is that if GM is not introduced, particularly in the way that they make their poppies produce, over time Tasmania could well be left behind in food, non-food and Tasmania's brand, given that we are, in most accounts and based on what you had to say in the paper today when it comes to the poppy industry, not necessarily broadacre.

**Mr HALL** - What did I say?

[10.30 a.m.]

**Mr GREEN** - You said you were worried about broadacre poppies being grown in Victoria, which would have a detrimental effect on price. It would bring it down to about the price of barley. We are not broadacre in Tasmania in that context.

**Mr HALL** - I know but what I am saying is, if they are grown there then there is a dilution effect.

**Mr GREEN** - It is.

**Mr HALL** - You are talking about TPI, which has said they are going to try to grow the perennial poppy there which is, as I understand it, genetically modified anyway so there it becomes

an issue in a larger sense.

**Mr GREEN** - The advice is that is not the case and there is no way of me trialling that in Victoria with respect to that anyway. Yes, there is some water to flow under the bridge but no, I believe what I believe but I do not think, if I make that decision that it is going to restrict the parliament from having a proper look at whether the moratorium should remain in place or not.

**Mr HALL** - I am pleased to hear the minister's comments that you are going to do that.

**Mr GREEN** - I am going to put a motion up and we will see where it goes from that.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, put the motion up because, irrespective of what you say about Tasmania's brand, New Zealand has had a royal commission and they have lifted their moratorium and supposedly agriculture is the main driver of their economy -

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, but they have a free-trade agreement with China, too, which makes a big difference.

**Mr HALL** - As you know, almost 80 per cent of what we produce here in Tasmania is not Tasmanian-branded, it is nationally branded, and that has nothing to do with branding at all. In that respect I think that - but I am pleased that you actually don't -

**Mr GREEN** - If you speak to one of the Greens and people like that, I reckon it will be a good reset when it comes to views about our branding and how we want to go about it.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, it is complex and there are different facets to it. We ought to make allowances for that difference.

**Mr GREEN** - We have until November next year and the issue will be the timing of that. We cannot afford to have a situation, and the advice I have is that we have the worst regulations in the country if we fall back to that, so we need to make sure that we get this done in a timely way.

**CHAIR** - Still on GMOs - Ruth.

**Ms FORREST** - What support does the government provide across the industry in looking at plant breeding as opposed to GMO? In the last committee, which Greg and I both sat on, this is one of the things that was talked about - the plant breeding to effect some of these changes to using less pesticides and less water or whatever it is. How much support is there and where does it sit?

**Mr GREEN** - We have the herbage development program that is being conducted through the Tasmanian institute. It is using the state-owned herbage plant seed bank and funds from royalties earned through the sale of those seeds and cultivars to develop the program. I have had a look at what they do and I see a great opportunity for Tasmania when it comes to the production of seed.

I was really interested to hear what they had to say, particularly about the way we have conducted ourselves when it comes to the grasses that we grow in Tasmania, particularly in drier areas. The ryegrass continues to grow - we sell a lot of ryegrass seed, et cetera, but during drought conditions it does not hold up that well where there are other grasses these days. If it had been planted in the areas that are subject to drought more often then we could probably, in combination with irrigation and other things, droughtproof Tasmania to a far greater extent.

I was really interested to hear that and encouraged. It is an area I want to work on with TIA to ensure that we leverage as much as we can off the irrigation development, particularly in the Midlands where they tell me that there is not the contamination in some parts, particularly the lower Midlands that has never had irrigation in the past. It would allow them to grow and market their

product, therefore opening up another opportunity for rotation when it comes to production off irrigation. You do not get quite the same returns straight up but you can graze the paddocks after you have produced the seed and do other things.

Yes, I think we are in that position. We want to engage the dairy industry and the red meat industry to a greater degree on production of herbage and the way that you develop types of herbage in Tasmania. At the moment our expertise is the problem so we are trying to put in place a strategy to ensure that we have the appropriate expertise to manage and further develop the seed bank and we are working in partnership with Tas Global Seeds and trying to leverage off the expertise that exists in that business.

**Ms FORREST** - The funding for that is secure, there is no threat to that?

**Mr GREEN** - To be perfectly honest, we need to think about and it is something I have put on the agenda with Tas Irrigation, to look at grasses and seed production as a potential opportunity for Tasmania. It is something I am going to try to use my influence on, to get the necessary funds. It needs another million or so into that program to allow it to take off.

**Ms FORREST** - What are you doing about that?

**Mr GREEN** - I am waiting for the forestry legislation to get royal assent to be able to leverage off some of those funds or working in other areas to think about how we can provide funds to

**Ms FORREST** - Are there other areas of plant breeding besides the seed production?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - Seeds are one thing but other plant breeding; maybe it all starts with the seed.

**Mr GREEN** - There are a lot more people employed in that area than I first imagined. There is a big opportunity to give it a boost and they are keen to do it.

**Mr HALL** - The point that DairyTas make is that through gene technology you can speed up all of that. That is the issue. Dairy, our biggest industry, is saying virtually all of our milk is nationally branded through Fonterra and others, and you have Victorian processes, basically all sold under the same brand.

**Mr GREEN** - I do not think that is necessarily reflected in the statistics we are getting on milk production in Tasmania - where we sit compared to other parts of the country.

**Mr HALL** - With the NLIS, National Livestock Identification System, can you provide any details of resources allocated to managing that system in Tasmania? We need to make sure that the appropriate data can be collected, analysed, and made available for industry so that any issues of non-compliance can be addressed.

**Mr GREEN** - We know it is critical, we know that the system is quite mature across the country and is subject to ongoing client improvements to ensure national consistency and compliancy and reliable tracing. There are changes that are important and quite a bit of dissension between the various states about whether we should adopt a NIL system for sheep and goats. We do not think in Tasmania we should. Victoria believes strongly they should and have provided the funds to do it; New South Wales do not think they should so are not supportive of it at all. I don't think I've got anything on -

**Dr KLUMPP** - We've gone through a bit of redevelopment in that area recently. We had some challenges because of vacancies, and then finding the right person to manage the overall NLIS



project. That position has been filled for some time now and we've recently appointed an NLIS compliance officer. As well as that, we reconvened the NLIS advisory committee and we are working closely with them to put in place much better compliance arrangements.

**Mr GREEN** - This is Dr Lloyd Klumpp at the table.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What is NLIS?

**Dr KLUMPP** - The National Livestock Identification System.

**Mr GREEN** - Cattle tags - it's just cattle at this stage.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, I just wasn't sure what it was.

**Mr HALL** - Minister, this is a question that has been asked of me by a few people, and it may well go across to the minister, Mr McKim's portfolio of Education, but we have rural schools with school farms attached. Some school principals have been advised that the government is considering the sale of school farms. Those school farms traditionally have given students a taster of agriculture, and there is a concern in agricultural communities that school farms could be on a hit list.

**Mr GREEN** - No.

**Mr HALL** - No? Not at all?

**Mr GREEN** - No. Certainly not from my perspective, in the discussions I've had with respect to that issue. Some schools have areas they're not utilising at all, and they're not being used as school farms as such. The department is providing the flexibility for them to make decisions about what they might want to do with any small piece of land attached to their school, that they don't utilise.

**Mr HALL** - I understand that. But, to your knowledge, none of them have been approached with a deal - if you close off your school farm, we'll give you -

**Mr GREEN** - Certainly not that I'm aware of, Mr Hall.

**Mr HALL** - Not that you're aware of?

**Mr GREEN** - No.

**Mr HALL** - Okay, fair enough. I know you're trustworthy.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Just keep a close watch on Geeveston Primary, then, if you wouldn't mind.

**Mr GREEN** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - Given your commitment.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. Have you heard something to the contrary?

**CHAIR** - Keep a close watch.

**Mr HALL** - Yes. Chair is quite right; that's what we hear all the time, just recently.

**Mr GREEN** - Right.

**Mr MULDER** - He's given an absolute commitment to keep an eye on it. That's all he's done.

*Laughter.*

**Mr MULDER** - I just thought I'd make that clear.

**Mr GREEN** - And I've only got one eye, you know that. That's why I can't read things.

**Mr MULDER** - Another Collingwood supporter.

**Mr HALL** - Another question going back to this line item with regard to agricultural development, and once again it falls across another portfolio as well. In infrastructure, we'll probably get that chance, but the international shipping issue we have at the moment, and the export of primary products - it's a great concern that it's taken such a long time to get a resolution to this matter. Have you had any input into trying to facilitate a resolution with exporters? Would you like to make a comment on that please?

**Mr GREEN** - I have certainly taken the opportunity to talk to freight forwarders in Tasmania and obviously I have talked to the minister a lot about the issue because it's one that comes up quite regularly and is seen as something that's holding Tasmania back, particularly since the international shipping line left Bell Bay; since then, through Pacific Aluminium there is some direct international shipping.

[10.45 a.m.]

There is no easy solution to this. I have spoken to people intimately involved in freight across Bass Strait, like Chas Kelly, for example. He likes to remind me - and I might be slightly biased in this regard but I take everything he says as being accurate when it comes to Bass Strait - the strait is serviced very well and it is the issue from that point on. It is almost impossible to come up with a system that suits every commercial operation in Tasmania because all products go to various parts of the world. I know Singapore is a sort of central hub - things go from there. But at the end of the day, it is amazingly complex. What we need to do is come up with a solution for the long term for Tasmania. The commonwealth is engaged in this at the moment in thinking about how they might be able to work with the state. Both sides of politics have been considering this as an issue but frankly, it is not one that we have the capacity to have a massive influence over given our budgetary position.

**Mr HALL** - With regard to intensive animal farming, can you provide a bit of an update there? There is a fundamental dilemma with this initiative in the Tasmanian Igor pork producers, adopt new practices that price them out of the market then Tasmanian consumers will just import these products from interstate operators, and we have seen that happening operating under the old practices. Probably the net result then is that there is no improvement for animal welfare if we are starting to close down what we have here. I know there have been inducements offered to pig and cackleberry producers but -

**Mr GREEN** - They have and the money for the sow stall changes is rolling out. I would refer the honourable member to what Coles and Woolworth's are saying about the products they want to put on their shelves and I think that the market is driving a lot of this change. I simply have to try to have Tasmania ahead of the game as opposed to lagging behind, and that is why we are trying to help our producers get to that point.

When it comes to eggs, that has been slightly more problematic in the implementation, although there have been transitional funds put forward and we are going to re-engage with the industry in the very short future to see how we can start to put that into effect. Any person looking at the

supermarket shelves now will see that there has been a significant amount of more space been given to barn-laid and free-range eggs compared to the past; it is changing and I am just trying to put our producers ahead of the game because animal welfare is front and centre in a lot of people's minds.

**Mr HALL** - What about the issue that we have had whereby the prison -

**Mr GREEN** - Many of those imports are, in fact, free-range eggs that we are trying to compete with.

**Mr HALL** - Cheaper battery hen eggs from interstate have been going, for example, into our hospitals and prison. Are they still coming in?

**Mr GREEN** - The new contracts are coming up now.

**Mr HALL** - Yes.

**Ms HANSON** - I believe the contracts are settled for this year, but coming into the next cycle, discussions will happen around September. They will look at the policy for rolling over existing contracts which will provide a chance for Tasmanian producers to

**Mr HALL** - Basically you are saying until now Tasmanian tax payers are paying for eggs and pork coming into our system that do not comply with Tasmanian laws.

**Mr GREEN** - The law has not changed from the point of view of producing caged eggs in Tasmania. Pure Foods were upset they missed out on the contract for the hospital; there is no doubt about that. It says something about the freight that you can produce and bring eggs into Tasmania and sell them cheaper than we can produce them. The contracts we are in now reopen in September and we will look at our procurement around that. I had not understood that until just then so I had raised this with the premier and cabinet myself. I will be keeping a close eye on what happens.

**Mr HALL** - To clarify the point, they are still coming from interstate into hospitals and the prison and they are non-compliant with what we would like to do here.

**Ms HANSON** - Yes, I believe so. We do not have any mechanism to stop that.

**Mr HALL** - Yet Tasmanian producers still have to comply with

**Mr GREEN** - Do not get ahead of the game, what we have said is we want to phase out caged-egg production in Tasmania, and we are looking to the industry to do that. You are right in thinking it would be good if the government is taking that position forward, that it should not be importing battery hen eggs so we are having a look at the policy as to how it might reflect what we want to see happen in the future but there has been no change to the laws and there will still be eggs produced in Tasmania in cages, until the transition is complete, because it is not illegal to do so. We have put a cap on the number of hens so we do not expect any new caged-egg facilities to open in Tasmania. We are trying to assist users to go the other way despite what the TQA have suggested, that we have stepped in and put a total ban on caged-eggs.

**Mr HALL** - In regard to a climate change matter in terms of agriculture - Tasmanian greenhouse gas emissions targets requiring agriculture to reduce emissions. As yet the sequestration of livestock abatement methodology has not been developed to reflect our Tasmanian conditions. Can you advise what the government is doing to address this issue? Will the government commit to work with the Tasmanian farming sector to ensure that appropriate models are developed?

**Mr GREEN** - In general terms, assisted by funding from the state government, the TIA,

Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, continues to work on projects that will help Tasmanian agricultural industry cope with climate change. TIA's ongoing research and development activities include establishing a soil carbon status in Australian orchards, monitoring soil and crop responses to controlled traffic farming, and the development of carbon farming, an initiative for the grazing industry. The government is aware that energy is a significant expense to primary producers and that is something that we need to continue to work with them on. The Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts held an energy-ready workshop in the last half of 2012 to inform Tasmanian businesses on the way they can reduce the energy emissions and costs. I suppose that needs to be read in context.

Recently, we conducted a round table forum where we engaged stakeholders in the discussions about the carbon farming initiatives and biodiversity and a whole range of other things. It was quite a useful discussion.

**Mr HALL** - I am not sure where this question falls exactly. With regard to NRM and funding matters there, it falls under Environment.

**Mr EVANS** - A bit of both nowadays.

**Mr HALL** - Minister, what resources, both in cash and kind, does the government contribute to the NRM bodies, the three of them? Further, can you advise what proportion of that is used for administration? Can you advise total staffing complements for all three NRM bodies?

**Mr GREEN** - There's a lot of detail in that.

**Mr HALL** - Is it something you need to take on notice?

**Mr GREEN** - We could take some of that on notice.

**Mr EVANS** - I can't give you all of the detail but I can let you know that we provide a cash contribution to each of the three regional NRM bodies. That's in the order of \$280 or thereabouts but I'd need to clarify exactly how much.

**Mr HALL** - I'll put that on notice.

**Mr GREEN** - Have you got that information, Kane?

**Mr SALTER** - No, not in these briefings but I think it is in that order.

**Mr EVANS** - Those funds are used predominantly to fund the administration of the NRM bodies. They access project funding, of course, through programs like Caring for our Country. We provide our funds to provide for the infrastructure and for the organisations rather than for specific projects. We do fund one particular program and that's the Tamar Esk Industries River Program - TIER. That money goes to NRM North who host that program.

**Mr HALL** - Could that information be provided? Could you also advise how much the commonwealth federal government push through the state government with regard to helping those regional bodies?

**Mr EVANS** - I can certainly provide that information as part of the answer. They provide those funds directly to the three regional bodies and they've recently written to each of them advising them on their allocations or as part of the new program which starts from 1 July next year.

**Mr GREEN** - So I take it that question is now on notice or do you need more information?

**CHAIR** - NRM is, yes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - With regards to your line item 2.1, and the budget that's there, with the implementation of the food bowl - and I personally believe the north-west coast of Tasmania is that food bowl - your budget doesn't seem to reflect the necessary back-up that perhaps you're going to need to service all of this. Is that accounted for - as in support services?

**Mr GREEN** - We rely on TIA to provide most of our support services, and we continue to fund TIA to the tune of about \$4.8 million.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So, the back-up services are budgeted for? I am just thinking of the dairy industry, and the big, new factory that is going up at Burnie, hopefully, even though a lot of growers are growing below the cost price.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - They are going to need a lot of help. Is this all in your budget?

**Mr GREEN** - Dairy is one area we are concentrating on - we try to provide a support by showing the way to the future for dairy.

**Mr EVANS** - It is a bit misleading to look at this number as being our total support to primary industry.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Yes, but there is no increase over the years up to the 2016-17 budget, or only a very small increase.

**Mr GREEN** - The dairy centre provides support, and that is about ensuring farmers are as efficient as they can be. The beef industry in recent times has complained that they have not been the focus of support - it has been more about dairy - and they think they ought to be. The arrangement I have in place with Tasmanian Irrigation has been really useful. It has seen the development of not only the irrigation infrastructure, but also market leveraging off the fact that irrigation development is going to ensure growth, and get people to take up opportunities in Tasmania. We have an additional \$750 000 going into Tasmanian Irrigation this year to assist them with that, and there is \$300 000 in recurrent funding.

**Mr EVANS** - That is \$750 000.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, the \$750 000 breakdown would be: investment attraction - \$220 000; market analysis - \$50 000; enterprise development - \$180 000; Tas Grown and Inc boot camp - a high level agri-business executive workshop - \$100 000; and new enterprise funding - \$200 000. That is real money on the ground. Like the loaves and fishes, \$5.52 million can turn into x billions of dollars in the future. Overall, we have hopefully got it right.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - With regard to commodity prices, we know that with peas, beans, and cauliflowers, you are lucky to have a bit of pea trash to sell at the end of the day to make your dollar. This affects Simplot immensely. Do you have an update as to how they are going? Are they feeling confident in the future here? Do you have any report from them?

**Mr GREEN** - There is a bit of a split in the vegetable producers at the moment with how they are approaching the vegetable industry. Simplot has been outstanding, and we have tried to assist them, as you know, with the gas to their Ulverstone plant.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - That is where most of the potatoes go, but what about vegetables?

**Mr GREEN** - They have been trying to ensure the brand remains intact, which is important. Vegetable growing in Tasmania, or anywhere really, is amazingly competitive in this day and age and it is not easy for people. TIA, as part of their collaborative project, funded under the commonwealth carbon farming initiative, is looking at opportunities for the use of biochar, for example, in agriculture. Biochar has the potential to store carbon and increase productivity, which goes a little bit back to what the member was talking about before. TFS research includes the identification of potential treatment options for the control of common scab in potatoes. This research provides significant opportunities to reduce the cost of production and increase the value of crops by reducing or eliminating crop rejection due to an infestation. Other vegetable research is addressing benchmarking for Tasmania's pea-production activities and then identifying the potential to significantly increase the yield and reliability which dictate returns to producers.

We are continuing to invest in programs designed to assist industry change. Recent initiatives have been the current investment with Simplot with processing vegetable growers to relaunch and extend the Australian-grown Birds Eye brand; assisting fresh vegetable packers to form an industry-marketing body under the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity groups; and fresh vegetable displays at trade shows that have taken place. We have worked with the TFGA to put together some work that we are bringing into our own work going forward.

I know it is majorly competitive but I think we are very lucky to have Simplot working with us in Tasmania. It is about ensuring that farmers start to take on some of the challenges associated with the size and scale of operations in Tasmania. Harvest Moon had a rocky road but seems to have recovered quite well. Carrots struggled for a while but by recapitalizing it is starting to go okay again.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - We all know about the big bombshell when the vegetables from McCain moved out of the state. That was terrible for our state. The only other vegetable processor we have is Simplot in Devonport. Are you feeling confident that they are going to hang in there?

**Mr GREEN** - They have not given us any indication. I know that they have changed the way they are growing peas across the state and that has had an impact. These things happen from time to time. From indications given to me I would say that they want to be here for the long haul. I think farmers need to get on board as well. We are all in it together and we have to look to diversify our crop range, a subject raised at the last estimates in the lower House. Quinoa, for instance, started in the Kindred/North Motton area. It is crops like that that aren't on people's radar at the moment that may well provide an opportunity for us. People were suggesting that where quinoa is a staple food in some countries they do not get enough of it now because it is all being exported. It's a product that's really taken off.

That particular farm received a grant not long ago to assist them with the packaging of their product. Hopefully they will get growers to grow it, so that is another crop that has potential for Tasmania.

**Ms FORREST** - Minister, viticulture is one of the areas that has been looked at. The premier has spoken in the past about it and the potential growth of viticulture. Is that all through TIAR as well or has the government got a bigger focus on viticulture? What are you doing in that area?

**Mr GREEN** - We are providing some funds through the grants programs that exist. People have had big ideas about viticulture. The value of our products has been maintained through the global financial crisis to a far greater extent than any other jurisdiction in Australia and therefore people were tending to think that if we put a lot more money into it we could generate and create a lot more wealth for the state, whereas the industry is saying they need to go carefully. They made a mistake in New Zealand in the Marlborough area where they are producing so much sauvignon blanc that it has had an effect on their viability. In Tasmania we think there is great potential for growth but it needs to be measured and going the way that maintains the prices that we are able to achieve

and maintains the quality that we want.

**Ms FORREST** - When I was in Germany and went to a research centre Blankenhornsberg in south-west Germany, they were talking about organic wines. They said that the organics now are being shown to have better quality than non-organic wines, which is interesting. Is there any support and work being done on organic wine growing in Tasmania?

**Mr GREEN** - The main organic producer here changed his system back to the normal system in the south of the state. I will not mention any names.

**Mr EVANS** - Out of the forestry agreement, we have provided \$1.2 million to the vineyard and orchard expansion program, we provide grants to support the planting of an additional 200 hectares in 2013. It is anticipated this program will result in a 12 per cent increase in land under vines, as well as an increase in orchards producing tree fruits and nuts.

We also strongly support the wine industry through TIA. As an example, we have had workshops delivering findings from the Australian industry program improving the quality of Australian pinot noir and sparkling wines. Events in Tasmania and Victoria were sold out.

We also co-fund, with the Department of Economic Development, the wine industry development officer. We work very closely with Economic Development, Wine Tasmania, and TIA as part of a coordinated effort to support the wine industry overall.

**Mr GREEN** - Any irrigation rollout in the south-east of the state would be good for industry. Who knows what opportunities there will be through the middle of Tasmania.

**Ms FORREST** - There is no real focus on GM at this stage? Organic wine in particular - it is up to the industry to determine that.

**Mr GREEN** - No, the industry themselves are very focused on GM.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It has come to my attention that Simplot Devonport is under threat of closure. They have made an announcement today that they are thinking about pulling out.

**Mr GREEN** - Nobody has advised me of that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Someone might have to.

**Mr GREEN** - We will be engaging with Simplot in Devonport as soon as possible.

**Mr HALL** - I have a few questions and we are running out of time. I will put them on notice.

**CHAIR** - We will go for a little longer while we are on Primary Industries and we have a bit of flexibility at 12.30. We might spill over to 12.45 p.m. and be back at 2 p.m.

**Mr HALL** - I will finish my questions on 2.1 and I will put the rest on notice for next week.

**Ms FORREST** - With the irrigation rollout, and the dairy expansion at Circular Head, the Circular Head project is still on the table. Is that right? Are we likely to see those progressed?

**Mr GREEN** - We had about \$2.5 million left in the kitty once we completed all the projects which was not enough to complete another project so we put those funds over to continue to get projects to the project-ready stage. The north-west is a project that we are working on to get it to the point where Infrastructure Australia supports us. We have applied for \$130 million to enable us to roll out those other projects. The north-west one is certainly one of those.

[11.15 p.m.]

## 2.2 Marine Resources -

**Mr GREEN** - I bring to the table Wes Ford, General Manager, Water and Marine Resources.

**Ms FORREST** - I have an overarching question, minister. Can you provide a breakdown of the support for work in the area of Marine Resources and the work that you are doing in that area?

**Mr FORD** - The Marine Resources area covers licensing of fisheries, marine farming areas and management of wild fisheries. In the licensing and administration area there are 18.8 FTEs involved in the licensing and data collection. In the marine farming area there are 10.8 FTEs involved in marine farm planning, development and inspection. In the wild fisheries management area there are 11.79 FTEs involved in the wild fisheries management plan.

**Ms FORREST** - With regard to the marine farm planning and development, what is happening particularly in Macquarie Harbour?

**Mr FORD** - In relation to the Macquarie Harbour expansion at the moment, the leases that were granted or intended to be granted as part of the expansion program are progressively being provided to the companies. The companies have started the process of laying out the new grid areas and the new season's fish are starting to go in over the next couple of months.

**Ms FORREST** - With regard to the comment made by the minister at the beginning that there have been savings required across this department, as all departments have, have there been particular cuts to this area that have made it more difficult to manage that side of it as we are talking about remote locations generally? We are talking about somewhat controversial issues at times with people being not so happy about the expansion plans and that sort of thing.

**Mr GREEN** - The Marine Farm Planning Authority and their interface with the industry has been second to none. The industry themselves have had to do all of the necessary work on the environmental impact studies and other things to get it to this point. IMAS - Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies - has been engaged to work with them as well on various issues along the way; I think that is working quite well. With Crown Lands, which is not my area, we are working on relocating the operations down there to crown land, away from the township of Strahan so we can give the tourism operators much more room and not to have that sort of commercial operation go in there. But I am not aware of any hindering factors that have come about as a result of resourcing, at least from our perspective.

**Mr FORD** - A portion of the agency's global production in the forward estimates will need to be apportioned across the Marine Resources output and that has yet to be determined.

**Ms FORREST** - That is a challenge and you will work on it as you go? With the abalone fisheries and the changes being made there, does that put extra pressure on your area in managing that with the virus they have?

**Mr GREEN** - We talked about our emergency management response to the AVG outbreak, which was seen as very good. We responded very well. The AVG issue is ongoing at the moment because New South Wales are not allowing us to export live abalone to the state. This is having an effect on business, particularly one in the north-west, at Stanley.

**Ms FORREST** - That is still an issue?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, we are still not able to export. I understand we are working on national protocols with respect to abalone movements around Australia. You might want to expand on this a



bit, Wes. Compliance is important. The outbreak itself ensured that those people who are processing abalone in Tasmania now have to have, not necessarily closed loop systems, but treated systems, before the water goes back into the environment. Farmers don't need to at this stage, but most of them are treating the water coming in.

**Ms FORREST** - I know you are aware of the issues with producers in Circular Head. I don't know how long that has been going on. It must be nearly two years.

**Mr GREEN** - I have spoken to the minister up there on a couple of occasions, and at this stage they are not prepared to lift the ban.

**Ms FORREST** - They have taken it off in Victoria where the disease probably came from. It seems staggering to me. I have had communication with the minister as well.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. We went so hard on it ourselves, and now we have had the outbreak they have decided not to allow us to -

**Ms FORREST** - Payback

**Mr GREEN** - Maybe. Do you want to add anything, Wes?

**Mr FORD** - Just a comment in relation to the disease itself. There is no evidence that the presence of the disease we had in Tasmania was related to the disease in Victoria. There are clearly different strains of the disease and the most likely scenario is that it is endemic and always has been. The virus manifests as disease if the animal has been handled in a stress situation. The way the industry handles the animals has changed over the last 20 years.

**Mr GREEN** - They all used to go into a can before but now we do a lot more fresh, alive transports.

**Ms FORREST** - Is this one of the things that IMAS look at?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes

**Ms FORREST** - The budget papers tell me about external funds expended on that scare, but how much does the state put directly into IMAS?

**Mr FORD** - The contribution to IMAS in the budget papers is \$2.6 million and that is the core funding contribution. In addition to that, about half a million dollars a year is provided by the state to fund various projects. That comes through the consolidated budget for the marine resources area.

**Ms FORREST** - So, they are not hamstrung in their activities in this area because of lack of funds?

**Mr GREEN** - No. The Abalone Council is working on this, and we will continue to work with them to ensure the research is up to date. We have the largest wild caught fishery in the world, so we need to try to protect that. There are other stresses and strains on the industry as a result of the urchin problem, which is probably related to rock lobsters which then could be potentially related to climate change. Much science needs to be done to understand how we need to manage the fishery in the future.

**Ms FORREST** - My next question was about the rock lobster fishery, which has been under a bit of pressure of late. What is happening with that?

**Mr GREEN** - The east coast fishery has been under the most pressure - other parts of the

fishery have held up well, as I understand it. They have a relocation going.

**Ms FORREST** - Is the relocation still going on?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mr FORD** - The relocation trials have now finished and the industry now needs to make some decisions about how they will progress it in a commercial sense.

**Ms FORREST** - So what was the outcome of the trial? Do we know??

**Mr FORD** - I think successful is how you could summarise them. Yes, the fish have grown, the appropriate quantities of rock lobster were moved, the growth rates were achieved, and the colour changes were achieved.

**Ms FORREST** - They obviously like my patch better than his patch.

*Laughter.*

**Mr FORD** - It is economically viable and now the industry has to work out how to pursue it.

**Mr GREEN** - There is still that sort of dividing line where they have all gone up the west coast and it brings them off the east coast to try and start to increase the biomass of lobsters there. We need to achieve an increase in the biomass of rock lobsters in Tasmania, particularly on the east coast to, I think, 15 per cent of pre-European settlement. We are not aiming for the stars but that is an area where we need to continue -

**Ms FORREST** - It does not sound overly ambitious - 15 per cent - does it?

**Mr GREEN** - No. It just goes to show how the fisheries have changed since then.

**Ms FORREST** - How much is attributable to climate change?

**Mr GREEN** - The jury is out but you see more eastern, green lobsters, what are they called? The eastern lobster. You see more of those in Tasmanian waters now than we ever had.

**Mr MULDER** - The greenlip is the abalone -

**Mr VALENTINE** - More of a problem with the sea urchin, I would have thought.

**Mr GREEN** - And the sea urchin.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I would have thought the sea urchin was more of a problem. They take the habitat away.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, that is right. The sea urchin infestation can probably be attributed to, to a degree anyway, the fact that there is not 100 per cent biomass of rock lobster to predate on the urchins so the balance is not right, that is the issue. Then the climate change as well is having an impact. But there is a sea urchin roe industry that did not exist before and that is starting to take off.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is right.

**CHAIR** - The only question I had in this area, minister, is whether there are any emerging opportunities for marine farming, and whether there is any collaborative work going on with IMAS to develop any of that given that species other than salmon are farmed elsewhere in the world.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, IMAS is working on projects for businesses that potentially offer the opportunity to expand marine farming. The sort of new frontier when it comes to salmon is the ocean - further out. There needs to be technology developed around that and then we obviously need to put protocols in place to ensure that that is managed. I am aware that IMAS is conducting some work, so we are thinking about that. Any other projects? We discontinued the striped trumpeter one.

**Mr FORD** - The important thing regarding the striped trumpeter work is that it got to the point where it demonstrated that you couldn't do any more research until there was a commercial opportunity to support it.

**Mr GREEN** - We closed the loop on it.

**Mr FORD** - The reality is the economics for aquaculture are such that they favour salmon at the moment as opposed to the salmon growers moving into something like striped trumpeter. The significant issues for aquaculture are not just the break in the life cycle in the science sense but dealing with the economics.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With regard to the salmon, is there any work being done on additives in food and all those sorts of things to improve the quality of the salmon as opposed to not producing something that might end up with complications purely because of what they are fed?

**Mr GREEN** - We have our labs working on disease issues, their gill meter and all of those things. We are very lucky to have Spredding here who is developing it; it is mainly Spredding that does that work. I think there are opportunities - I was amazed at the amount of potato starch, wasn't it, that is being imported into Tasmania to be turned into fish food to be exported to New Zealand. There is a lot of it. It is an industry that offers us some really good opportunities to vertically integrate.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What about land-based aquaculture to reduce the pollution issue?

**Mr GREEN** - Land-based hatcheries or closed-loop hatcheries are the way of the future. We hope that, with Macquarie Harbour expansion, we will see some more hatchery development in Tasmania. John Diggle might be able to comment on this if we get to the industry standards - IS - side of things. There is some interest with respect to water availability when it comes to hatcheries so my expectation is that we will see some expansion in that regard.

Is there anywhere they have on-land salmon production? There are freshwater, smaller operations for trout.

**Mr FORD** - It is technically feasible but most, if not all, of the salmon production around the world is going into ocean production.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So the nutrients are dispersed over -

**Mr GREEN** - You have to be out in the sea which brings all the various challenges with it.

**Mr FORD** - One of the significant issues for land-based salmon farming is the economics of it. If it were closed cycle there would be massive costs associated with the water treatment process.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Filtering and all of that.

**Mr FORD** - If it were a flow-through system there would be far more environmental issues they would have to deal with. It comes down to the economics. When farmers can grow in the ocean and produce a valuable commodity, they are unlikely to move into a land-based environment to

significantly increase their costs.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am thinking of the nutrient levels below the nets and the dispersal of that.

**Mr GREEN** - That is all managed. There are areas of fallow, and close monitoring.

#### **Output group 4 Water Resources**

##### **4.1 Water Resource Management -**

**Mr HALL** - Can you provide an update on how much of the commonwealth's \$140 million has been received and how much has been spent?

**Mr FORD** - In relation to the actual expenditure, in the order of \$159 million has been committed already from the state and commonwealth funds from a total pool of \$220 million. The remaining funds are yet to be committed and relate to the development of the South-East Irrigation Scheme in the Upper Ringarooma Irrigation Scheme. Once those two are approved the funds will be fully committed.

**Mr HALL** - Any additional federal funding being sought at this stage?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, we have made significant submissions to Infrastructure Australia, chasing \$130 million to further develop irrigation in Tasmania. Although we did not bring it today, we could show you some of the submissions that have been made, the video that goes with it. The feedback I have had is that Infrastructure Australia were very impressed because it is a good model when it comes to restructuring an economy in regions of Australia, particularly the east coast of Tasmania. That is the submission that we put forward and I am happy to table that.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, thank you.

**Mr HALL** - I was going to go through your priority projects and where construction is but I think we have a reasonable handle on those.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. It is one of those situations where we talked about funding for so long and having it all there and then we were worried about planning, worried about being able to meet the national water initiative - now we are billing water.

**Mr HALL** - Is there enough hay in the barn for additional state money on top of the commonwealth funding?

**Mr GREEN** - Not at this stage, no.

**Mr HALL** - Thank you. I had asked a question of you, minister, in regard to a suggestion about HECS-style loans for farmers, buying the irrigation rights because you have all the infrastructure and all the other matters to put on top. Has any further consideration been given there? Sometimes the financial institutions have been a bit reticent to lend in those respects.

**Mr GREEN** - We will certainly be engaging with the institutions through TIA. The government does not provide the wine industry with assistance for farmers to purchase irrigation rights for irrigation schemes. There is, however, a loan scheme administered by the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and the Arts that provides low interest loans to farmers to purchase irrigation equipment. The scheme has only been accessed by a few. I am aware that there are issues with respect to the access of that. Following the drought and then floods combined with the global financial crisis a few years ago, there was some concern that a number of farmers

would not be in a position to borrow funds to commit to the purchase of irrigation rights if the scheme was developed. Tasmanian Irrigation undertook an analysis for the need for such a large program was not generally warranted due to low interest rates and that access to loan funds did not seem to be a limiting factor. That is the advice I have.

**Mr HALL** - So, basically, through DED there is potential for access for finance for infrastructure but not for irrigation rights; is that the case?

**Mr GREEN** - Water, as I understand.

**MR FORD** - It is also important to note in this process that these schemes have been built with contributions from public funding that range between 75 per cent and 50 per cent of the total cost of the scheme anyway. It becomes a question about whether the public should further fund loans for farmers when the public purse is putting in a significant contribution.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, I suppose it depends on the equity that the person has in their property or whatever. Sometimes they're struggling to borrow from their own financial institution. It's commercial reality I suppose.

**Mr GREEN** - There has also been a recent announcement by the commonwealth of two \$30 million loan tranches, \$60 million for Tasmania over two years, that we are trying to achieve flexibility in so as to ensure that that might assist to continue to drought proof Tasmania, to versify farms. We are really interested in working with the commonwealth to see whether we can make that work for us.

**Mr HALL** - Let's hope that the poppy industry remains strong for the Midlands area. Otherwise that is not going to be good for all of that water rolling unprotected. New dam permits?

**Mr GREEN** - We have done the work, we understand what we have in stock when it comes to plan, the 25 000 hectares. The new dam approvals process provides for the continued substantial development of water resources in the state. The approvals process now includes a single permit. All the required approvals, except for Aboriginal heritage, all dam applications continue to be assessed within the statutory 12-week approval period and since the formal dam approval process started in 2000, just over 1 500 new dams have been approved, providing an additional 270 000 litres of water. Dam applications accepted and being assessed by the technical advisory committee in 2012 were nine, in 2013 it is 12. The applications with notices from the assessment committee requiring provision of additional information in 2012 were 35 and this year it is 22. There are no dams awaiting delegated approval - that is, those of 100 megalitres capacity and with no issues, none of those. So the total number in March 2004 was 44, in March 2013 it was 34.

**Mr HALL** - One of the main criticisms, of course, has been the time taken for approval, to get through the approval process; has that diminished at all?

**Mr GREEN** - My understanding is that all dam approvals are continued to be assessed within the three month assessment period and then they are achieving their target.

**Mr HALL** - Okay. With water rights investment, do we have a handle on how much water or how much non-farm investment in water rights is occurring and also how the water market is going - the trading part of it?

**Mr GREEN** - There is a market. Now that it manifests itself when Gunns sold us water and we have gone to a recent option of water. Certainly money has been paid for water on the South Esk, as you know. Gunns sold their water from Bells Lagoon as well, and the option, as I understand it, went pretty well.

**Mr HALL** - Do we know what the non-farm investment is? I am talking about across all of the schemes, institutional.

**Mr FORD** - No, we do not because one of the challenges in water investment processes is trying to determine who is an investor and who is an irrigator because we have many pastoral houses for example, that will purchase and have purchased water entitlements but are not directly related to the property which they might first appear to be. I go back to the point the minister made that the market is growing and expanding, and trying to get a handle on who is a direct on-farm irrigator purchasing water, as opposed to an off-farm investor purchasing water, we do not have that information at the moment; it is not collected. Specifically with regard to Tasmanian irrigation projects, was sold almost 52 000 litres from the first state irrigation projects.

**Mr HALL** - Megalitres.

**Mr EVANS** - Megalitres, at a capital contribution of \$53 million from farmers.

**Mr HALL** - That was through the auction system. Sorry, you are about to go to the auction system now.

**Mr EVANS** - That is through direct sales to farmers. It is the first time we have held an auction; we sold 175 megalitres of water entitlements at a cost of \$208 000.

**CHAIR** - That was sold for.

**Mr EVANS** - Sold for an average price of \$1 190 per megalitre. That is a really promising start; it shows there is a market and it is being developed.

**CHAIR** - There were some past bidders, I understand, at those auctions as well.

**Mr EVANS** - Yes, there were some significant parcels passed in but we are still holding by a quite significant findings of unsold water.

**Mr GREEN** - You cannot get those Meander farmers to buy their water.

**Ms FORREST** - Too tight. Miserable, tight. No hay in the barn.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No barn.

**Mr HALL** - If I may continue, Mr Chair, after being ostracised like that. I am doing my best to maintain relative order.

**Mr GREEN** - Good on you.

**Mr HALL** - My last question on this line item output goes to the national water initiative of which we are a signatory. Under this agreement, the states must make a risk assignment statement that defines the relative amount of risk that the government accepts when licensed water allocations are reduced, so risk assignment is a process used to define how the risks of reduced or less reliable water allocations are to be shared between irrigators or other water users and governments. In other words, how much of a reduction will governments compensate for? NWI provided the funds to develop the state water management plans yet there was no move in the water legislation amendment bill which we put through to reflect this. All other states have stated their risk assignment model and how it aligns with the NWI proposed model and one would sense by doing so they accept that reductions in allocations required to meet environmental needs will require them to provide compensation'. Can the minister tell us when the Tasmanian government will comply with these

requirements?

**Mr GREEN** - I can imagine where there has been an over allocation of water in some jurisdictions around the country they would not have a problem in that regard.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, that is right.

**Mr GREEN** - As far as I am aware, in Tasmania we have been able to make the national water initiative work for us in providing us with the opportunity to develop irrigation in our state because they are not over allocated. The national water initiative ensures that there are environmental flows and that if there is a development to take place that you can demonstrate the surety of that water and all of the projects mean a 95 per cent surety cap and some are 100 per cent like the Meander, as it stands at the moment. The ones up the Forth system would be the same because the water that is flowing down the Forth used to flow down the Mersey which means that there is a lot more water coming down, whereas the lake rivers and Ouse rivers use rivers in a different space even though we resolved most of those issues.

I do not think that you need to worry about compensation for water being taken off farmers in Tasmania. Mind you, we have to make sure that people are paying for the water and using it properly.

**Mr FORD** - Under the Water Management Act, if the minister removes water allocations that are provided for by statutory water management plan, compensation is payable. Provisions already exist in the Water Management Act. The point the minister is making is our system is very different to the mainland system.

**Mr HALL** - Yes, I am aware of that.

**Mr FORD** - Our management is to ensure that when we set the allocation limits we are setting them to a point that they are not over allocated in the first place.

**Mr HALL** - The reason I ask is, if the system does change and their water rights were taken from them, is there a system of compensation and there is provision under the act at the moment.

**CHAIR** - When I go to the budget papers it suggested the IFS sits under output group 3, which is not your portfolio, it is Mr Wightman's portfolio of resource management and conservation. We do not do output group 3, that I can see here, page 11, point 3.6. That is what it suggests and it is under output group 3 and with minister Green we do not go to output group 3.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I was hoping to get an update on the Heybridge irrigation scheme. I presume that is on the backburner now.

**Mr GREEN** - The Dial-Blythe scheme.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - The Blythe, sorry.

**Mr GREEN** - The Dial-Blythe scheme is one we are bringing right to the start date but we do not have enough funds in overall funding to complete the project but we are hoping to get funds through the Infrastructure Australia funding but we will have this project ready to turn the sod as soon as we can.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - So the plans will be up; it is just a matter of time and money?

**Mr GREEN** - At this stage it is the additional money.

**Mr FORD** - The business case has been completed and Tasmanian Irrigation has provided the business case to the minister.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Just watch this space.

**Mr GREEN** - That is right.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Would your dam applications be down because of the irrigation schemes that are coming in?

**Mr GREEN** - They are down a little bit.

**Mr EVANS** - The numbers are down but size is slightly up.

**Mr GREEN** - The numbers are down but the size is up. It has sort of been maturing as a market. There was a big influx and a lot of dams were built. Now it has slowed down with the size of those dams increasing. That is a reflection of the fact that many dams have gone in in Tasmania and managing it beyond that in water courses is difficult so now we need to look at dams off-stream.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I would have seen that your irrigation scheme would have negated the need for a lot of dams.

**Mr GREEN** - No. Sometimes irrigation schemes actually promote it because the water goes into dams, particularly when you have summer and winter flows. For example, the South Esk project we have built is all based on a big dam filled during the winter time off-stream.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - I am presuming you can irrigate out of the pipe.

**Mr GREEN** - Not all of the schemes.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - No, that was the case for us.

**Mr FORD** - It is worth noting that the number of dam applications in the Midlands area over the last six months has started to increase again. That is very much premised on the potential to access the winter water out of the Midlands water scheme. The way the Midlands Water Scheme is designed to operate where it will deliver water across the whole year, clearly the farmers are not going to be able to directly irrigate in winter, so to make the best use of that winter water they need to be storing it. We have seen a number of fairly large dam applications come through the system in the last six months because people can see the Midlands Water Scheme is going to be delivering water.

**CHAIR** - We will go to the policy areas now, minister.

## **Output group 5 Policy**

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you explain the line item there - you have \$21 000 extra going into 2014-15 and then it is \$109 000 and then back to a \$23 000 increase. It is going out there a little bit - what is going on there? Is that some major projects that are being dealt with or staff movements or something?

**Mr EVANS** - Which page are you on?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am on 11.31.



**Mr EVANS** - Indexation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The \$109 000 is indexation? Between 2014-15 and 2015-16?

**Mr EVANS** - Also, in 2015-16, there is the 27th pay period in that year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. That explains that. With respect to the performance measures and the things you use - progress with projects of strategic importance - how do you measure that progress? Do you have a really good project management culture happening within your department still, good steering committee processes and reporting up to executives?

**Mr EVANS** - What we tend to do in a policy group is capture whole-of-agency projects that do not logically have a home in any one of the individual outputs. They are usually large, complex and require the dedicated project management resources that we have in the policy division. Some examples -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Irrigation projects?

**Mr EVANS** - One of the things that happened with the Midlands scheme is that the federal government, through the EPBC - Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation - act, required us to undertake a strategic assessment of the entire area in terms of its environmental issues. That is a very large and complex project and that was coordinated through the major projects group of the policy division.

The Aboriginal Heritage Legislation Development is another example where the specialist policy and legal skills that we need to run that project, sit within the policy division. Cat management regulations, the work flowing out of the TFA in terms of reserve making, once the proposed reserve orders pass, will largely be led out of the policy division.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Crown Land Assessment stuff.

**Mr EVANS** - The making of the new reserves arising out of the CLAC - Crown Land Assessment and Classification - project has been coordinated and run through the policy division. They are the sorts of projects that we run. They are closely monitored by myself and the rest of the executives, and given a fair bit of attention. By and large, they are well and professionally managed projects.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Good.

**Mr EVANS** - The strategic assessment for the Midlands scheme, for example, took years less than similar projects in the rest of the country.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you follow the overall state government project management guidelines to track -

**Mr EVANS** - We do through those projects but more generally across the management of all projects in the agency.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is good. Aboriginal heritage legislation - that was coming to us, was it not? Is that now going to be wrapped up into the heritage legislation, as opposed to having its own bill?

**Mr EVANS** - No, it is separate legislation. It comes under minister Wightman's side of the portfolio rather than minister Green's. There is a draft bill which is still being finalised. We are still

talking to stakeholders about that and with everything going well, that will be introduced into the parliament over this calendar year.

**CHAIR** - We will move to biosecurity and product integrity.

## **Output group 6 Biosecurity and Product Integrity**

### **6.1 Biosecurity -**

**Mr HALL** - In regard to quarantine, what proportion of flights and containers are coming into the state which are not inspected at this stage?

**Mr KLUMPP** - We inspect all containers externally and 25 per cent internally. That is based on the manifest of what the contaminator risk is.

**Mr GREEN** - Sorry - it is 15 per cent. We made a blue there.

**Mr HALL** - New Zealand spuds and the zebra chip - what is the latest situation in regard to the importation of zebra chip disease?

**Mr GREEN** - We do not allow potatoes to be imported.

**Mr HALL** - Okay.

**Mr HALL** - We have that under control but there will not be any allowance of any importation?

**Mr GREEN** - We have our own. We have had no applications to import potatoes. We don't allow the import of the potatoes.

[12.00 p.m.]

**Dr KLUMPP** - We have a set of import requirements and before import can be made an application has to come to us and we run through the risk assessment before any determination is made. There has been no such request to us.

**Mr HALL** - The dreaded green snail is a real issue if it does get here. It has been found in Cobram in Victoria. What biosecurity are we doing there?

**Dr KLUMPP** - Victoria has a set of actions to try to contain that snail.

**Mr GREEN** - Is it eradicable?

**Dr KLUMPP** - They are trying to at the moment; that hasn't been decided. It will be a containment strategy in the Cobram area. From our point of view we have all the import requirements, the industry inspections to be adhered to in order to prevent it coming here.

**Mr HALL** - Just in regard to industry paying more for biosecurity, there have been suggestions in the past that the government might consider requiring industry to make a greater contribution to biosecurity. Has there been any further consideration?

**Mr GREEN** - We are comfortable at this stage with the system. If we want to ramp it up to a far greater degree it will mean it is going to cost a lot more. At this stage we do not have the resources to put into that area. If there was to be a request for a significant ramp-up or change to biosecurity operations in the state overall then there might have to be a user pays system put in place.

**Dr KLUMPP** - I would like to emphasise this is part of the Tasmanian Biosecurity Strategy and it is not so much about user pays, it is also about partnership arrangements.

**Mr GREEN** - This is beyond the strategy that I am talking about.

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes, I'll come back to that.

We do need to do some work about who is responsible, who are the risk creators, who are the risk beneficiaries and align the funding of our biosecurity system in that way.. That is a bit of work that we flagged with the newly formed Primary Industries Biosecurity Consultative Committee. We have been talking to our industry partners through that committee about putting together little industry and government-based working groups to work through those processes. That is as much about partnership arrangements and projects that are jointly run as it is about co-funding of any initiatives

**Mr GREEN** - With regard to Simplot, I want to put on the record that Mr O'Brien is saying about the operation. He said their Devonport plant will be required to produce a five-year improvement plan with a satisfactory outcome or face the prospect of long-term - three to five - years, closure. We will be talking to them as soon as we can to understand exactly the position. It is not an immediate closure.

**Mr HALL** - Could I go quickly confiscations and restricted produce. How much has been confiscated this year and can you give a brief overview of the nature of those confiscations?

**Dr KLUMPP** - It's around 1 500 to 1 600 kilograms per year and a wide variety of things. We've have some weird and wonderful things. Someone mentioned the other day that we had a bit of a cow's leg turn up in a wheat shipment. The routine stuff like fruit is surrendered and seized. This year we had two instances of finding fruit fly maggots. We have training to find the Queensland fruit fly. All that stuff is fairly routine.

**Mr HALL** - The fruit fly came in via fruit and vegetables out of the Melbourne markets did they?

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes. I believe the figure relating to confiscations is really difficult to interpret. You can argue that if we get more, then we are managing the risk more, or you can say that we are not providing enough disincentive. A much more significant measurement is the measurement of identified pests and diseases post-border, and we can proudly say that we have not had any this year.

**Mr HALL** - Is there any capacity for the fruit fly to become established here, with global warming and all that sort of thing?

**Dr KLUMPP** - Yes, absolutely, and many of our work programs are specifically aimed at not allowing that to happen.

**Mr GREEN** - To a greater degree, potentially, with climate change. It is easier for them to get established. They can over-winter.

**Dr KLUMPP** - It is still pretty difficult.

**Mr GREEN** - But it has been shown that they can over-winter.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - The member for Windermere is not here so I feel compelled to ask, 'How is your Fox Task Force going?'

**Mr GREEN** - It is not my turf.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Biosecurity? Exotic pests?

**Mr GREEN** - No.

**Ms FORREST** - He's not exotic.

**CHAIR** - Leonie is going to try everything angle, minister.

*Laughter.*

**Mrs HISCUTT** - What department is it then, if it is not DPIPW?

**Mr GREEN** - Brian Wightman's department.

**Mr EVANS** - It is in our agency but it is not part of minister Green's portfolio but, broadly speaking, it is going really well. We have just recently undertaken a review and we are likely to move away from the strategic baiting program and more into a program of responding to incidents. That coincides with some changes in likely funding for the program, in any event. The commonwealth funding, which I cannot recall off the top of my head, is due to come to an end on 30 June. We have applied for further funding through Caring for our Country.

**Mr GREEN** - I have written a joint letter with minister Wightman on Caring for our Country. He has been focused on foxes and devils and I have been focused on carp, when it comes to Caring for our Country.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Feral cats?

**Mr GREEN** - Cats are a whole other thing. Carp is my number one priority when it comes to feral species.

**Mr EVANS** - Our application for fox funding has been short listed, in any event, so we are likely to get some funding, or we are confident of getting some funding, but we have not yet heard from the commonwealth minister about the outcome of our application.

The only other thing to add is that the fox program has now been embedded into the new invasive species branch of the agency. The work of that group does not focus solely on foxes. It is also responsible for dealing with other invasive species, including feral cats, and some birds like the Indian mynah -

**Ms FORREST** - Are feral deer covered?

**Mr EVANS** - Not yet.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They have an eradication program for them. It's called the minister.

*Laughter.*

**Mrs HISCUTT** - My next question is about weed management. Do you know how much funding you might get?

**Mr EVANS** - I do not know off the top of my head.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - It will be in the budget.

**Mr GREEN** - That is one of the risks no-one wants to take - fumbling the ball when it comes to foxes.

**CHAIR** - Any further on biosecurity?

**Mr VALENTINE** - If cats come under it, but I do not think they do.

**CHAIR** - No. Grants and subsidies - we have already agreed with Inland Fisheries. We have discussed the IMAS and TIA payments so I suspect there will be no questions there.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Would the issue of the hit on local government and forestry - it is not a grant - but might come under local government grants. Where would that be dealt with?

**CHAIR** - We can go there later with the minister. Still with grants and subsidies, if there are no questions and the only other couple of areas for this minister are Private Forests Tasmania, the TFA, which has no further funding for the next budget, and racing assistance we will go to under your portfolio, minister. It seems that we have concluded that part of the process with regard to the Primary Industry portfolio. We will take a quick break.

**The committee suspended from 12.11 a.m. to 12.23 p.m.**

### **Output group 3 Resource Management and Conservation**

#### **3.1 Land Management Services -**

**Mr GREEN** - I invite to the table Simon Overland, the Secretary of the Department of Justice; Greg Alomes, the Executive Commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission; and John Martin who assists me when it comes to planning.

I know that there will be a number of questions in respect to various stages of planning so I do not propose to provide an overview at this stage.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am interested to know how you are going to have an ongoing review of the regional strategies. There is some debate about what sort of provision would be made into the future to put the government structure in place, to make sure that that happens, otherwise we will see them fragment and not be adhered to, if there is not enough attention being paid to ongoing review and management.

**Mr GREEN** - We need to put in a governance model with respect to the ongoing updating and management of the regional land use strategies. It is an important component of the planning reforms that are taking place because the land use strategies provide consistency on a regional basis and allow regions to understand how they have to react to that strategy when developing or working within their planning schemes. We are making progress with respect to the governance model.

**Mr ALOMES** - In the three regions the funding has now expired through the regional planning initiative and the commission has been working with the minister and regions to continue the three regional planning committees.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are councils putting in some money?

**Mr ALOMES** - Yes, dollar-for-dollar, and in the south government agencies have joined the committee so the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources; the Department of Economic

Development and Southern Water. We have broadened the membership to deal with the strategy issues and in the north there has been a stage 1 review of the regional land use strategy and we have used that model and it is working successfully and we are about to embark on a similar stage when reviewing the southern regional land use strategy.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In the out years, is there going to be a consistent regional review of every one of those strategies?

**Mr ALOMES** - Yes, there will. We have a program to ensure that we develop more consistent structures to the regional land use strategies and working out how they integrate with the regional infrastructure strategies and the regional economic development plans.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That sounds very positive. You can understand the concern with regard to fragmentation in the future, if it is not paid attention to. With all these new planning schemes coming on board and the southern ones were advertised on Saturday, and I do not know how long that is out for comment.

**Mr ALOMES** - Six weeks.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You also have your north-west schemes, how are you going to have enough staff to be able to do that in a reasonable time frame?

**Mr GREEN** - We have put in \$500 000 in this budget to assist the Planning Commission with the necessary resources. When the Sullivans Cove Water Authority came over, a number of staff came over with that and the Hobart City Council has responsibility for planning in that area now. The people who came over, while they are all fully engaged, did not necessarily have all the skills required to assess schemes, so we have provided those funds. Mr Alomes has been on my back about resourcing for a long time.

We have made a big commitment to planning of \$6 million-odd and we are trying to make sure that we give councils every opportunity to bring forward their schemes and we get to the point where we have a consistent approach across the state. The fact that the Southern Tasmanian Councils Association has lodged its 12 for public consultation gives me great heart that they are working towards a time frame that you are starting to put in place yourself so we are still working to September to get those done. We have the nine in from the north-west. We have finalised three in the north and we have some others coming soon and we had a review of the northern land use strategy with a view to ensuring that Meander, West Tamar and the Dorset councils could comply.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to regional projects of state significance, what is on the go at the moment? Any major projects?

**Mr GREEN** - There are no regional significance projects and there has not been one yet. We thought Bunnings at Burnie might be one that went through okay. Most people are satisfied with the system as it stands.

[12:30 p.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** - And planning directives? How are they running?

**Mr GREEN** - As in the PD4s?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am aware of that one, but are there others on the go?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. We have the multi-residential code that is being worked up now. As I understand it, the public consultations are into the formal hearings. That will obviously further ensure that the system is more streamlined and the important part about that is that we have engaged

industry, particularly the Master Builders Association, in assisting us to get to that point, which has been good.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Good. Thank you, Chair.

**Mr MULDER** - Much is made of the fact that we have 29 or more planning schemes in operation and I notice that the planning directives are trying to get standardised sections in schemes relating to various zones and things.

Would you like to comment on the fact that every single one of these planning schemes has been reviewed in recent years, every one has been the subject of much negotiation between the councils and the Planning Commission and as a result of that every one of these schemes was presented to the relevant minister for signing off. The fact that we have 29 different planning schemes is actually the result of a minister approving 29 different planning schemes.

I am wondering whether we have learnt any lessons from that and that the new moves towards planning directions are now going to be based on the unified model rather than the 29 different ones that you and your predecessors had signed off previously. Where does the fault lie for having 29 different planning schemes?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Twenty-nine councils.

*Laughter.*

**Mr MULDER** - Not with local government, I would suggest.

**Mr GREEN** - I suppose the first thing to be said is that local government is supposed to undertake a five year review of their planning schemes. I guess each planning scheme was governed to a fair degree in its style and the way they operated with the person they had responsible for planning in their jurisdiction

**Mr MULDER** - I would like to contradict that because -

**Mr GREEN** - In the past.

**Mr MULDER** - having gone through the planning process in the draft, and I am only talking about the recent past here, that the scheme was actually the result of seven years of workshopping backwards and forwards between what council wanted and what the Planning Commissioner was prepared to advise here.

**Mr GREEN** - This is when we looked at the Clarence planning scheme when we initially went forward to make that as part of a model planning scheme, the implications of that. You are not talking about that?

**Mr ALOMES** - Minister, if I could just highlight that 70 per cent of the existing planning schemes were prepared a good 15 to 20 years ago so there is only a handful that have actually been done recently.

**Mr GREEN** - That is what I was about to say. In the five-year review we found that many of the councils never met that review, so their schemes were never updated to the extent that they should have been. Part of what we are doing now when we achieve that change as a result of having the common language strategy and then the -

**Mr MULDER** - But even so it is safe to say those that have been done in the last five or six years have all been done as a result of recommendations going to your office -

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Mr MULDER** - and you have ended up approving different planning schemes.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, because I really had no choice because they would have been approved. The point is that there is much said about the planning system in Tasmania but it is not nearly as bad as people tend to make out if you look at the statistics.

**Mr MULDER** - I am thoroughly aware of that. I am running down the line quite seriously that the criticism of there being different planning schemes is in your bailiwick, it is your responsibility that we have these different planning schemes because you have signed them off.

**Mr GREEN** - The counter to that is I would just have to rewrite them according to how I feel about it, then hand them back and that would not wash, either.

**Mr MULDER** - It is the minister who is responsible for signing the thing off and you were committed to not having this differentiation; it is within your remit to not sign off.

**Mr GREEN** - How many have been signed off in the period that we have been working up the new fit?

**Mr ALOMES** - None.

**Mr GREEN** - In the end it got close, didn't it?

**Mr ALOMES** - No, they didn't submit. The only ones that I am aware of are West Tamar and Central Coast.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, we used Central Coast as a model.

**Mr ALOMES** - The translation of that scheme to the template scheme is very marginal.

**Mr MULDER** - I will give an example. The Clarence City Council went into the revision of its planning scheme in 1998. It submitted a planning scheme that was very similar to the one that Brighton had approved the year before. The Clarence Council thought it could save itself a lot of time and problem and simply adopt the framework of the Brighton scheme, then spent eight years in negotiations with the planning commission to come up with a scheme that was pretty different.

**Mr GREEN** - At that stage we were looking to put in place a new model planning scheme for others to comply with, in modern contemporary. That has had its issues and that is why it was thoroughly scrutinised at that time.

**Mr MULDER** - Can we get a commitment from here to henceforth not be blaming the councils? Their planning schemes are not in their control.

**Mr GREEN** - I have been doing my best not to blame councils. In fact I have been doing my best to work with councils to adopt the schemes. It is others that have been blaming councils and saying there is an easy fix to this rule, just bring in a statewide planning scheme. I believe it is not possible, given I know the regional differences that prevail. I am not blaming the councils.

**Mr MULDER** - That's not true, though. The planning commission has often said that 29 separate schemes are unacceptable.

**Mr GREEN** - Statistics do not bear out much of what has been said about the system. It is as if



you have two ends of the spectrum. One end of the spectrum suggests that you should be able to do just about anything you want at any time and then there's the other side where to the plan anything with any rigour makes it impossible to do anything. The fact is that neither of those are options. We need to come up with a planning system that is contemporary, ensures that we have sound logic with respect to our planning going forward, and consistency right across the state. That is what developers have been wanting for a long time.

**Mr MULDER** - And it is in your power to deliver it.

**Mr GREEN** - It is.

**CHAIR** - Minister, it seems to have been a commentary over many years about the coordination across municipal boundaries of infrastructure and the like and challenge that provides to developers. It could be water -

**Mr GREEN** - That's fixed.

**CHAIR** - That is just one example. Does the new structure address those kinds of thing?

**Mr GREEN** - It certainly addresses issues associated with zones, development zones regionally as opposed to just within the jurisdictions. It has to be better in that respect, I guess. We saw an example yesterday at George Town where there is an issue that comes up to the boundary. One side of the fence is different to the other side of the fence. That's when you are dealing with rural living zones. That may well be fixed as a result of the land use strategy being amended to allow for that provision. In the main, the issues that you are talking about particularly when it comes to industry and industrial zones and redevelopments, the strategy overall will take care of the matter.

**Mr ALOMES** - That is correct. In terms of the ongoing review of strategies, we'll pick up issues. The commission has to look at the adjoining municipal areas and make sure there is continuity in the planning. That is one of the tests we have responsibility to apply, in the form of an assessable process.

**CHAIR** - Minister, does coastal policy sit under this area, in terms of its finalisation?

**Mr GREEN** - The work we are doing at the moment with this specific commission has a significant role to play, but we have the work being undertaken through DPAC and we are about to put out a discussion program. Otherwise, I have to go to cabinet first and then prepare the discussion paper regarding coastal planning. We know it has been an issue for a long time but, as part of that discussion paper, we are looking at effectively having three areas of coast. Developed, underdeveloped, and - what is the right term?

**Mr MULDER** - How are you going to describe it? A little bit pregnant?

**Mr GREEN** - Developed, modified and natural. We are trying to address coastal policy sensibly and weigh it against what is occurring in those areas. In the centre of Hobart, in the vicinity of the waterfront, coastal policy will be at the forefront, particularly given that we are looking to develop Macquarie Point. That development will be front and centre with respect to the coastal policy. Setbacks will be considered, as well as all the other things that need to be thought of in respect of potential climate change, hazards, et cetera. But natural areas, for example the west coast of Tasmania, south of the Arthur River, can be treated in a different way. That hopefully will streamline our ability to put forward a policy that is sensible and achievable.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I get the impression there are no further questions.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Mr Chairman, can I make some closing comments?

**CHAIR** - Sure.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is it still up to councils to implement the policy within their planning schemes, or is it something that is generally applied?

**Mr GREEN** - Once the policy is in place. We are still working on the old coastal policy that stands at the moment, and we need to modernise that.

**Mr ALOMES** - The requirement in the act is that all state policies are implemented through interim planning schemes. There were a number of councils that had not previously implemented coastal policy so the existing policy will be implemented. There are fundamental flaws in the existing state coastal policy, from the commission's perspective. It can be improved and the improvement needs to be in the area of how it deals with climate change and innovation - plugging in those sorts of issues. It is a document that is now being implemented.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So, by the time September comes around, with the southern ones due to be completed, the coastal policy should be in most planning schemes around Tasmania?

**Mr ALOMES** - They have codes they have put in through regional planning scheme model templates, and that will ensure all coastal councils have the state coastal policy implemented.

**Ms FORREST** - In his own remarks, the minister said his portfolio was bound to have cuts, and adjustments to a different financial framework, or capacity. How have you made savings within this area and does it present specific challenges? And, are further savings required across this part?

**Mr GREEN** - We have funded this area to undertake the planning reform but, if it was back to a baseline -

**Ms FORREST** - Once that is gone.

**Mr GREEN** - once the commission's work is included with respect to this.

**Mr ALOMES** - We have managed our tasks and responsibilities so that we have put as much available resource as possible into the interim planning scheme process and the reform process. When that is completed, we will be able to go back to our normal work. We are not doing as much policy work as we would have normally, and other tasks have been cut back because we need to make sure this reform is implemented according to the act. The adjustment is still in place to deliver this, and we will adjust back when that occurs.

[12:45pm]

**Mr GREEN** - There will be a savings total of \$68 000.

**Ms FORREST** - For this coming year?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - How is that going to be achieved? Is that a work in progress?

**Mr ALOMES** - It's just how we manage our staff commitment, basically. Our predominant costs are staff and so we have a number of staff that are in short-term employment arrangements and we juggle through the process. The other part is that we have to go through the normal vacancy management control processes, so we abide by those processes.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, Ruth. We will move to Resource Management and Planning Appeals

Tribunal.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to the average length of time that a matter sits before the tribunal, do you have any statistics on that sort of situation?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. The number of appeal applications lodged this year with the tribunal has reduced compared to previous years. The tribunal continues to comply with the statutory requirements regarding time lines and, where it cannot do so, obtains relevant extensions. The percentage of matters determined within the 90 days without the need for extensions: in 2010-11 it was 70 per cent; in 2011-12 it was 66.7 per cent; and in the year 2012-13 it was 80 per cent. The vast majority of extensions, 100 per cent for this financial year to date, are as a result of the conduct of parties or requests of the parties. The tribunal continues to retain a high settlement rate of appeals through alternative dispute resolution processes. This is running at approximately 81 per cent in the year to date.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Eighty-one per cent to date? It was 78 per cent before, so it's gone up a bit. Sorry, it is projected to be 78 per cent in 2013-14?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, that's right.

**Mr OVERLAND** - It's up.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you are not having any issues or difficulties with staffing the appeals tribunal?

**Mr GREEN** - There is a new acting chairman of the panel. Other than that, I am not aware of any deficiencies leading to problems.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you foresee any elevation of appeals as a result of the new planning schemes coming into play? That's a finger in the wind, I know.

**Mr GREEN** - It's the other way around.

**Mr OVERLAND** - We are not saying that; we're seeing a decrease.

**Mr VALENTINE** - A decrease.

**Ms FORREST** - It's the same question as last time. Is there a savings requirement that this - was it the whole of those two areas - or does it have its own savings requirement? If so, what is it?

**Mr OVERLAND** - I think it was included in a previous - in the \$68 000.

**Ms FORREST** - Is it across both areas?

**Mr OVERLAND** - I think so, but I can confirm that for you.

**Ms FORREST** - Okay. Again, is it creating challenges in that one of the savings strategies or one of the ways savings came to be made - I think it was two years ago - when a decision was made not to have regional hearings?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes.

**Ms FORREST** - That's a big issue for some people from our patch, as you'd be aware, minister. What sort of outcomes have you had; have we found that people haven't been as likely to proceed

with a claim or an objection or whatever and they're not actually presenting to give that evidence?

**Mr GREEN** - The advice is that, as a result of budgetary controls, we had to put tighter controls on travel and modify its listing practices; the use of the conferencing facilities has encouraged parties in regional areas with the cost of those facilities borne by the parties.

**Ms FORREST** - The parties being the people who -

**Mr OVERLAND** - The people appealing.

**Mr GREEN** - Yes. This is in line with the policy applied by both the Supreme Court and the Federal Court with the use of video conferencing facilities. The tribunal continues to convene some hearings outside Hobart where warranted to avoid injustice or undue hardship. It also conducts on-site mediation and on-site interventions. From my perspective, it has quietened down as an issue. Initially there were fears that you wouldn't be able to make it a reasonable submission. I do not get any feedback of that.

**Ms FORREST** - I have not had any complaints to my office or anything, which is interesting. What is the cost of the video conference to these people?

**Mr GREEN** - That is a very good question. We will have to take it on notice.

**Mr OVERLAND** - It depends on the length of the conference but, again, we can get that information for you. I do not have it available.

**Ms FORREST** - That would be of help to have. What is the usage? How many video conferences have there been and in what areas?

**Mr GREEN** - We will get that for you.

**Ms FORREST** - There are limited facilities for video conferencing so could we have it broken down to the areas that they have come from as well?

**Mr OVERLAND** - Yes, if we can.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - When it comes to, not erroneous claims, but someone who sees someone else's -

**Mr GREEN** - Vexatious - and frivolous.

**Ms FORREST** - The member for Western Tiers knows all about that.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - Okay - you have a filtering system for that, I presume, or notification of the owner who is affected?

**Mr GREEN** - Yes, there are mediation processes in place. You could probably use the building here, 10 Murray Street, as an example of people making frivolous claims.

**Mr HALL** - They should have left it there.

**Mr GREEN** - Do you like it?

**CHAIR** - You two can have a discussion later. We are moving on.

**Mr GREEN** - We are moving right along then. We have a mediation set up to make sure that that is accounted for.

**Mrs HISCUTT** - The reason I ask is I know someone who had someone come onto their property and take a photo and pretend that they were doing it for some other reason and then put it in for heritage listing, unbeknownst to the owner who then read it in the paper that it was being listed. What sorts of things can you do to guarantee that -

**Mr GREEN** - That is a heritage issue but in general terms, when it comes to frivolous planning appeals, I have no plans to tighten the rules and regulations around frivolous planning appeals at this stage. The new schemes and the way that the system works, and having a look at the numbers that actually go to appeal and the numbers that actually get to the last point where they have formal hearings, are very low. I have already said that 80-odd per cent are being resolved through other mechanisms. I think only 2 per cent go to formal hearings and of those, about 0.025 per cent end up in the hearings. It is a really small number compared to the number of development applications that go in.

**Mr HALL** - Following on from Ruth's question, minister, how many times has the tribunal met outside Hobart in the last 12 months or so?

**Mr GREEN** - We will take that on notice.

**CHAIR** - I think we are done.

**Mr GREEN** - Thank you.

**The committee suspended from 12.55 p.m. to 2.02 p.m.**