

**Monday 6 June 2016 - Estimates Committee B (Rockliff)**

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

**Monday 6 June 2016**

**MEMBERS**

Mrs Armitage  
Mr Dean  
Mr Finch  
Ms Rattray (Chair)  
Mr Valentine  
Mr Willie

**IN ATTENDANCE**

**Hon. Jeremy Rockliff MP**, Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

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

**John Whittington**, Secretary  
**Mark Sayer**, Deputy Secretary  
**Tim Baker**, Deputy Secretary  
**Adrian Pearce**, Manager, Finance  
**Deidre Wilson**, General Manager, Corporate Services  
**Carole Rodger**, Director, AgriGrowth Tasmania  
**Robert Cockerell**, General Manager, Land Tasmania  
**Lloyd Klumpp**, General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania  
**Fionna Bourne**, General Manager, Water and Marine Resources  
**Tim Grant**, Valuer-General  
**John Diggle**, Director, Inland Fisheries Service  
**Robert Gott**, Director, Marine Resources  
**Stuart Fletcher**, Program/Information Manager, Land Tasmania Directorate Land Tasmania

**Department of Education**

**Jenny Gale**, Secretary  
**Robert Williams**, Deputy Secretary, Department Services  
**Jenny Burgess**, Acting Deputy Secretary (Policy)  
**Trudy Pearce**, Acting Deputy Secretary (Schools)  
**Kane Salter**, Director, Finance and Business Services  
**Jenny Rayner**, Director, LINC Tasmania

**Katrina Beams**, Executive Officer of TASC

**Stephen Conway**, CEO, TasTAFE

**Nick May**, Executive Manager Finance and Resources, TasTAFE

**Lori Hocking**, General Manager Operations Organisational and Business Development,  
TasTAFE

## **Ministerial Staff**

**Leanne McLean**, Senior Adviser

**Ashley Bastock**, Senior Adviser

**Anna Jones**, Adviser

**Laura Richardson**, Adviser

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

**CHAIR** (Ms Rattray) - Good morning everyone. I welcome Minister Rockliff and his team to the table, and the newest member of Committee B, the member for Elwick, Josh Willie. I also acknowledge and congratulate Jenny Gale on her elevation to secretary of the department.

## **DIVISION 1**

(Department of Education)

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As you would appreciate and know, education is fundamental to the success and growth of Tasmania. Every child has the right to receive a high quality education. I believe all Tasmanian children deserve the best possible start to life and that valuing education is every Tasmanians' responsibility.

The Tasmanian Government is committed to investing in and improving education outcomes, and the 2016-17 Budget bills and our strong investment in our education and training system are delivering a record \$1.48 million into education and training. Last year we continued to deliver on our election promises, including our \$45.5 million commitment to extend high schools to year 12 and create a job-ready generation of young Tasmanians with the education skills needed to enter the workforce.

With the commencement of the 2016 school year, 12 schools have been delivering years 11 and 12 and a further 18 will commence their extension from 2017. This program has already resulted in a 57 per cent increase in the number of enrolments, with the first 12 Tasmanian secondary schools to be extended since 2014. We will be very clear that, despite this, college numbers remain stable and of course, as I have always said, colleges are pivotal to our years 11 and 12 extension program. If we are to provide genuine choice to those young people who would not normally go on to years 11 and 12, we need to have high schools and colleges working together so that can provide the types of subjects that students want to study, wherever they are in our state. It will mean doing things a little differently to the past and particularly taking advantage of the technology that is now available. It was also maximise the opportunities for our young people by working together, and colleges play an important role in this.

This year we will continue our focus on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes of our students with a new \$10.7 million investment over four calendar years which builds on the programs such as LIFT - Learning in Families Together - and a literacy and numeracy specialist to deliver targeted support to facilitate improvement in student outcomes.

Of course, literacy for adults is also vitally important. Today I announce that 13 organisations across Tasmania will be awarded nearly \$600 000 in grants under the 2016 grants program for employers to increase literacy and numeracy skills in the workforce.

We know that health and education are closely related and this year's Budget has provided for the implementation of a number of new key initiatives that will improve student health and wellbeing, healthy kids and better outcomes, with the provision of close to \$11 million over four years. We are also providing \$5.2 million to support the recommendations of a Strong Families, Safe Kids report -protecting our most vulnerable children. Our commitment to Students First - Gonski - remains with an \$87.4 million investment in the 2016-17 year, up \$10 million more than 2015-16.

The 2016-17 Budget continues our investment in the future of Tasmanian students with the largest state infrastructure investment in schools across the forward Estimates in at least the last 20 years. One hundred and ten million dollars will be invested over four years to upgrade facilities at schools across the state.

Of course our greatest asset in delivering high quality public education is our staff. Over the whole department, the number of staff has increased by 294 or 207.19 FTE from March 2015 to March 2016. I would like to provide you with some more information about the teacher numbers. In 2016, the Government has provided resourcing for 33 FTE more teachers in schools than was available in 2014, on the same enrolment basis. Teacher numbers change daily across the Education department - sometimes significant numbers - especially in relation to casual teachers. There are also adjustments from year to year with staffing formulas based on changes in enrolment numbers and student characteristics. It is therefore not a particularly helpful comparison to look at point-in-time comparisons for teachers; this is why we talk about resources allocated.

However, for subject completeness I provide the following information. Overall teacher staffing numbers across the department have increased by 129 head count, or 108.75 FTE, from March 2015 to March 2016. In terms of staffing numbers of teachers in schools, taking into account the impact of enrolment reductions and changes in student characteristics, so the same enrolment basis, there are 17.7 more FTE teachers in schools between March 2014 and March 2016. The reason for the difference between the increase and overall resourcing between 2014 and 2016 - 33 - and the actual number increase - 17 - is because some of our resourcing for staffing in schools is provided to each school through this school resource package. This allows schools a level of flexibility as to how and when they run the programs and when they hire additional staff. It will be the case that at the census date at the end of March many schools will not have hired all their staff.

In conclusion, the Government believes that a degree of flexibility for schools is necessary to allow them to tailor learning to meet the needs of their students and their school community. This was, of course, no different under the previous government. This is why it

is a better to understand the Government has resourced schools in 2016 for 33 FTE more than 2014.

I acknowledge the terrific work done by the Education department staff in Tasmania. I thank them for the commitment and their professionalism and of course their dedication. It is widely accepted that education is the cornerstone of Tasmania's economic and social improvement and will continue to build on our key policies to improve educational outcomes and raise the value of education in Tasmania.

## **Output group 1**

### **Education**

#### **1.1 In School Education -**

**Mr DEAN** - Minister my first question is about year 11 and 12 in schools. How many students have remained within the system that might not have otherwise continued on to years 11 and 12 in the colleges? Also can I have at the same time the impact of those students going on to year 11 and 12 in the schools that are in that program - the impact on the colleges or if there is an impact on the colleges, and therefore the numbers at the colleges now? Has it gone down or up, that is the other colleges we have in place.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a good question and I have very particular in ensuring that the colleges remain very important in this 11-12 extension. We see no threat to the colleges. There are great examples of good partnerships between colleges and high schools. I go to Scottsdale High School and Launceston College - a very good partnership has developed there. St Marys, St Helens and Newstead are the same. Hobart College and Huonville, Smithton and Hellyer are good examples of colleges and high schools working together on this particular extension.

Probably the most successful high school extension in terms of overall numbers would be that of Huonville High School, which has had significant increase in their 11-12 enrolments over the last two years. Interestingly, Hobart College has also increased their numbers as well. There is no real evidence of any impact there. The anecdotal evidence that I have in speaking to colleges is there has been no material impact as a result of taking students away from colleges. The purpose of the policy, as pointed to in your first question, is this is about getting those kids that would otherwise not have engaged in 11 and 12 staying at the high school.

There are some good examples of that - New Norfolk High School, for example. I met with the kids there. They talk to me and say, 'I would not have gone to year 11 if there wasn't the availability here at this school'. There have been some good infrastructure improvements so 11-12 has their own area. Students, while they feel part of the school, still have that separation, so they are in years 11-12 and have their own space.

In terms of numbers for extension schools, in 2016 Huonville has 95 students, Scottsdale 38, Smithton 38, St Helens District High School 60, Campbell Town 8, New Norfolk High School 15, Rosebery District High School 5, Mountain Heights School 14, and Tasman District 2 - a total of all extension schools of 275. As for 2016 extension in colleges, Claremont 598, Don 985, Elizabeth 1039, Hellyer 893, Hobart College 1096, Launceston

College 1455, Newstead College 756 and Rosny 1152. Total senior secondary schools is 7974, which is an overall percentage change of from 2014 to 2016 of 0.3 per cent increase.

**Mr DEAN** - Do you the figures for the previous year at Newstead College and Launceston College?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Newstead College, 2015, 824.

**Mr DEAN** - There is a 100 drop there.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is right. Year groups change from time to time. You can't blame extension schools on that drop. Launceston College was 1455. That is a 5.3 per cent increase on the 2014-16 figure. Launceston for example, had 1369 in 2015, and now 1455. I mentioned Huonville High School as well which has had that increase, but if look at the feeder college, Hobart College, 2014 base line 916, 2015 - 1025 and 2016 - 1096. That is a steady increase from Hobart College. The largest increase of a high school has been at Huonville High School. There is no evidence that Huonville's extension has impacted at all with that.

[9.15 a.m.]

This is all about engaging our kids who would otherwise not have gone onto school. The policy was never designed to take students away from colleges. It was designed given our, by national standards, low retention rate, completion figures, Mr Dean, we had to do more to keep our kids at school longer. You would be surprised with the barrier. Ms Rattray would know this from Scottsdale and I have spoken to parents and kids themselves, that hour travel or moving into the larger city for some rural students who have grown up in the community, is a big barrier. If we can reduce that barrier by having subject offerings at a high school that, at least for year 11, encourages the kids to stay for year 11 and then gain confidence to do some subjects at Launceston College in the year after then that is a good thing.

**Mr DEAN** - You have said this has caused students to go on to year 11 and 12 who otherwise would not have done so. Where is the evidence to support that? Have each of these students been spoken to to gather that information or is that just a motherhood statement?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It's not a motherhood statement. The important thing is the evaluation is ongoing. As soon as we started this program we started to evaluate to get a good understanding of the students.

**Mr DEAN** - It's a fair question to ask. A lot of these students would have gone on to college at the expense to their parents and families. I am just trying to identify the numbers of students who have continued on with their education to year 11 and 12. I would have thought we would have had some figures on that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The exercise in evaluation is being undertaken as we speak. That data will be able to be drawn upon. We have to wait until that evaluation is finished until we get a true picture. We are interviewing samples of students to get a true understanding of that quality assessment, as well as quantitative.

The University of Tasmania was commissioned in 2015 to undertake this evaluation exercise and we will have a true picture of exactly what you are asking for as the data from that evaluation rolls in.

**Mr DEAN** - Last year was the first year or the second year?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - First year.

**Mr DEAN** - I would have thought that we would have known from last year, from simply talking to those students, whether they would have gone on or not.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There is strong anecdotal evidence that is the case. Kids are remaining at high school who would otherwise not have gone onto college.

**Mr DEAN** - I have spoken to a number as well who have simply said, 'Yes, I would have gone on, it has just made it more convenient for me to stay in my area and go to school'. I have done that as well and I guess all of us probably have. I am not saying that I do not support this. I would like to know those who have gone on who would not have otherwise gone through with their education. Is there a drop out rate in the last year?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There have been public statements from students themselves, from New Norfolk, Huonville, as an example, who have said, 'I would not have gone on to year 11 if I didn't have this offering in schools'. It's all about choice at the end of the day. It is also about the overall numbers, ensuring we have sustainable year 11 and 12 offerings at high schools, and maintaining the critic mass within our colleges as well.

We said we would evaluate this, learn from it as we go and build on our capacity to offer 11-12 extension in our high schools, whether that be direct schools, in isolation, or partnerships between schools and colleges. Either direct partnerships or coalitions of schools and a college. We made it very clear coming to the 2014 election and our policy statement said we are open to innovative models of delivery of 11 and 12. With an apparent retention rate of around 70 per cent, and it has gone up now to just under 74 per cent, and a completion rate from year 12 of what is now 50 per cent, it was under 50 per cent when we came into government. Compared to the national average of other states, we were appallingly low. We had to do something about this and if that means offering high schools, years 11 and 12 subject offerings in partnership with colleges, it is all about the students at the end of the day.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a dropout rate; that was the basis of the question. Is there a drop out rate or a no show rate.

**Mr DEAN** - The evaluation might be interesting too, Madam Chairman, how others are done.

**CHAIR** - You might like to table a copy of the evaluation if that is available.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is not completed yet, it is ongoing, but I can talk about

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, you had a lot of really good numbers in your overview about extra teachers. I am surprised that you are not able to tell us the numbers who have stayed on

to do high schools, under the system that you have introduced. So they have stayed back at St Helens and Huonville and those other schools. Do you have those?

**CHAIR** - I just read those out.

**Mr FINCH** - Sorry, I might just take those, and the evaluation when is that going to come out.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is up to the University of Tasmania. We have John Williamson, Mike Corbett, Chris Gardner, who are members of the faculty of Education and the University of Tasmania, and they were commissioned in 2015 by the Department of Education to investigate and describe the implementation of the years 11 and 12 extension in selected secondary schools. The purpose of this is to obtain the data to inform the role out of subsequent implementation and how can we learn from that. It started in 2015, as you would expect, when the extensions rolled out. We are expecting a draft report of the first year by the end of July this year. They are collecting data from St Helens District High School, Smithton High School, Scottsdale High School and Huonville High School. The data is also about to be collected from the 2016 extensions schools as well. The data gathering for this initiative involves interviews with principals and teachers working at years 11 and 12 level. Also, a sample of students enrolled in years 11 and 12 level, and the chair of the parents and friends association and committee members and a survey of year 10 students, which will be very informative.

A draft executive summary on the 2015 implementation, based on interviews, has been prepared. Further quantitative data is currently being collected. The executive summary indicates the years 11 and 12 initiative was viewed overwhelmingly positively. Four key actions have been suggested through the draft report:

1. To consider the formation of an association of extension of schools to further consider strategic operational issues.
2. To review and refine current curriculum.
3. To provide additional support to students and teachers to engage in an online learning environment.
4. To ensure years 11 and 12 student pathways lead to further educational opportunities.

Subsequent to the collection of initial data, extension schools participated in a range of meetings to progress action 1. To address action 2, an assistant manager has been appointed to work to support curriculum provision and delivering extension schools including on-site provision and opportunities for blended learning through shared networks. This will also contribute to actions 3 and 4.

In addition, for action 3, the department and Telstra are working together to discuss further possibilities for online learning and support for extension schools including opportunities to better support students to access online learning both at school and at the home.

**Mr FINCH** - I do not want to take up too much time. It is a fulsome answer and I thank you very much for it. Are you happy with the way this is unfolding as per the Government plan to bring this initiative in?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My expectations have been exceeded, when I look at the college numbers, particularly at Huonville High School and Hobart College, and when I look at the participation of students and talk to them. Students have expressed this publicly that they would not have otherwise gone on to school - not all students; everyone is different. It is about choice. To talk to a student who says they would not have gone on to grade 11 without this opportunity. I have been to barbeques and smaller functions to meet the kids at the beginning of this year and last year. It is heart-warming to hear from themselves how important this initiative has been to them. Parents are also excited about the fact their child is still at school.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - They do not have any choice. They have to stay until they are 17. There is no choice unless they have a job.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Jobs are challenging to find, and this is why we are looking at changing the Education Act as well.

**CHAIR** - I do not think we will start on this right now. Otherwise, we will be here until lunchtime and it will not be helpful.

**Mr WILLIE** - I would like to comment on your initial remarks. It sounds like you have a lot of quantifying to do around those enrolments. There is still a fair bit of work to be done. I am interested in the transparency around your figures. If you look at the New South Wales Department of Education, it is a great model for transparency around figures. There are school tables, and projections of funds.

Some \$45 million has been allocated to extend regional high schools to years 11 and 12. Your budget material says funding is available for additional staff and infrastructure upgrades as needed. For each of the schools that has been extended, can you please detail the funding allocated to infrastructure, the funding for additional staff and the number of additional staff on a full FTE basis that each school has access to? Are you able to provide those figures?

[9.30 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can certainly take it on notice and will provide the figures for you. I am well aware of the New South Wales data. Last year's Department of Education Annual Report was the most transparent, open and data-driven annual report ever in Tasmania. I want all the data I can possibly extract out there in the open so people are informed of exactly where we are in terms of educational outcomes in Tasmania. No-one could criticise this Government for not being open and transparent when it comes to data. Our annual report released in October 2015 clearly stated that. I released data last week on apparent retention and completion, and on students who achieved TCE; that data was right through from grade 10 to grade 12. That is the first time that data has been presented in such a way that is easy to understand and absorb. It sends a very clear message that while there has been some improvement in recent years in education in terms of our apparent retention and completion, there is still a long way to go, particularly when you track some of our kids from grade 10 in high schools and whether or not they achieve their TCE. We have a long way to go.



The resourcing for schools under this 11-12 initiative is based on student enrolments, which is in line with the college formula of up to a maximum of five additional teachers. In addition, the following specific allocations will be applied: a \$10 000 one-off grant to assist with developing teacher expertise, training and developing partnerships with local colleges; an additional one full time equivalent base grade teaching allocation-

**Mr WILLIE** - For each school?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. There will be a 0.5 full-time equivalent advanced skills teacher for single schools; a 0.6 FTE for partnership schools and the base school; and for 2017 coalition schools, one AST in the lead school. There are additional recurrent AST allocations of 0.1 FTE for additional enrolments over bands of 30 - for example, 30 to 59 enrolments equals plus 0.1 FTE; 60 to 89 enrolments would be plus 0.2 FTE; and an additional 0.25 full-time equivalent staff allocation to support the provision of additional vocational education and training.

I met with all of the principals of extension schools, those about to extend in 2017, and all the college principals, just a few weeks ago in Riverside to find out more about how we can support this extension and support the schools and colleges to roll out and work in collaboration with the extension. Some of the high schools have offered years 11 and 12, for example, before. Smithton comes to mind and St. Helens, but they were not funded for it. The funding that I have just read out is based on a college formula so schools do not have to borrow from their 7 to 10 budgets, as they previously had to, to fund their 11 and 12 extension. If the resources are needed, they are there. It is an important point and the difference between any schools that might have been offering 11 and 12 previous to our government and schools that are offering 11 and 12 now.

**Mr WILLIE** - You will provide me with the individual school data?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - For each school that has been extended for 11 and 12?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can, yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - That is for infrastructure and additional staff?

**CHAIR** - That will be 30.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's quite genuine; I want each school.

**CHAIR** - Can we take that on notice?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, you can take that on notice. I have a supplementary question too.

**Mr DEAN** - If the minister has it, why don't we get it?

**CHAIR** - It can be provided over here, but do you want it read out for every school.

**Mr DEAN** - I have a heap of questions on that as well.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have it here available to read out if you would like me to.

**Mr WILLIE** - In the interests of transparency, I think people would like to know the projections for each school and what has been spent in each.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is the operational resource currently allocated to participating schools. So if I go to 2015 schools, for example, Scottsdale High School - 0.6 of AST, 1.25 of a base grade resource. That is a total of 1.85 full-time equivalent and additional staffing as well, Scottsdale is 0.82, Smithton High School.

**Mr WILLIE** - Infrastructure spend?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Scottsdale, none.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** - So not every school received \$10 000 then?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Shouldn't you have that information?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, I have that information but my point is Scottsdale did not need any infrastructure improvements. In addition, there were some minor works done to improve locker rooms if I recall visiting there a while ago. It was done within normal budgets.

Smithton High School, same figures in terms of AST 0.6 base grade 1.25, total increase 1.85 and additional staffing 0.46 and Smithton High School had considerable funds spent on it, in terms of a new gymnasium, with another \$7 million to spent over the next 12 to 18 months to upgrade the school as a separate capital allocation.

**Mr WILLIE** - So that is not the \$45 million -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No. We will go to Huonville High School and they are in partnership with Dover District High School - AST 0.9, base grade 1.25, total increase in FTE 2.15, and additional staffing for that program being 3.63. Huonville has had construction of a new kindergarten facility to allow for the existing kindergarten facilities to be refurbished for years 11 and 12. That is completed at a cost of \$1.55 million.

St Helens District High School is in partnership with St Marys - AST additional 0.7, base grade 1.25, total increase 1.95 and additional staffing on top of that of 0.59. No capital required there. Campbell Town District High School, these are 2016 schools, so go to AST additional 0.5, base grade 1.25, total FTE 1.75, one off in the schools resource package \$10 000 and additional staffing of 0.45. If I go to Campbell Town they have had redevelopment of an existing area to provide contemporary learning environments for year 11 and 12, which I visited. That was \$275 000 and that has been completed. Mountain Heights, an additional AST of 0.5, base grade 1.25, the total FTE 1.75 and additional 0.15 allocation on top of that. All the schools receive \$10 000 in their first year. Mountain Heights, there is a provision for IT equipment at a cost of \$20 000 that has been completed. Rosebery District High School, an additional 0.5, base grade 1.25, total 1.75 and they get their \$10 000. They

have also had provision for IT equipment at a cost of \$20 000. Tasman District, the same figures are Rosebery, 0.5, 1.25, total 1.75. They have had redevelopment of existing areas to provide a contemporary learning environment for years 11 and 12 at a cost of \$200 000. In this state Budget you would have realised that they have been allocated that \$4 million.

**Mr WILLIE** - Which is separate from that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. New Norfolk High School, AST 0.6, base grade 1.25, total FT 1.85, additional staffing requirement is 0.85. Redevelopment of existing areas to provide a contemporary learning environment for years 11 and 12 with funding of \$275 000 and those who have visited the school would realise it has been completed. Do you want me to go through 2017 schools as well?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes please.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Devonport coalition of schools, one FT, one AST, base grade 1.25, the total FTE 2.25 and they get their \$10 000. Additional funds of \$16 000 is for a car for each of the Devonport and Burnie High School partnerships.

**CHAIR** - A car for people to drive around in between schools?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Travelling between schools, yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - That is outside the \$45 million.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Inside the \$45 million.

**Mr WILLIE** - The cost of those cars?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well \$12 000 has been allocated. If we go to Ulverstone High School, 0.5 additional AST, 1.25 base grade, total FTE 1.75, one off SRP of \$10 000. Cressy District High School 0.5, 1.25 base grade, total 1.75, and the \$10 000. Lilydale are going work closely with Scottsdale and they receive a 1.6 AST, 1.25 base grade, 1.85 total, \$10 000. Port Dalrymple .5 AST, 1.25 base grade, 1.75 total, \$10 000.

Partnership schools Oatlands District High, Jordan River Learning Federations Senior School Campus 0.6, base grade 1.25, total FTE 1.85 and \$10 000. The Burnie Coalition, Burnie High School, Yolla District High School, 1 AST, base grade 1.25, total FT 2.25 and one off SRP \$10 000 with \$12 000 for a car as well.

The Tagana Coalition, which is Rosny, Rose Bay, Clarence and Rokeby, 1 AST, base grade 1.25, total FT 2.25, one-off SRP \$10 000 and \$16 000, which comprises of a bus for the Tagana partnership as well. That excludes enrolment figures so when the enrolment figures come through they will get further allocation based on enrolment. We have IT funding as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can you confirm that the additional staff employed by the schools, as part of the extension to years 11 and 12, are permanent staff?

[9.45 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is the combination of permanent and fixed-term staff.

**Mr WILLIE** - A combination?

**CHAIR** - Is it still the case that you do not gain permanency until you have done three consecutive years?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. Mr Willie, the funding is permanent. It is an allocation for the school and it remains.

**Mr VALENTINE** - On the question of urban versus rural, is there any rethinking going on about the extension of urban high schools to years 11 and 12 at, for example, Clarence High and those sorts of schools? Are you giving any thought to perhaps not continuing down this path with urban schools?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, I am not rethinking it at all, but I will be guided by the communities themselves. Our original commitment was for 21 rural and regional high schools in our first four years. It occurred to me as I received feedback in travelling the state - and I have probably visited 80 to 100 schools in the last two years and it is the most pleasurable part of my job -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Especially those performances we go to.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Exactly. Elizabeth College's *The Wiz* on Friday night, which you and I both enjoyed, was fantastic. It was a lot warmer there than the football.

**CHAIR** - A better result, too.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Absolutely, a fantastic result for the kids. It was a pleasure to see.

The communities came to me and said they wanted to be part of this. If the Ulverstone High School committee comes to me and asks why they cannot participate, I need to give them the opportunity. In October last year, based on our existing policy of innovative models and delivery of years 11 and 12 - and it is not one size fits all; the policy has never been about that - I opened up the expressions of interest to all high schools across Tasmania to see who might or might not be interested as a community. A number put up their hands and some were wanting to work in isolation, if you like, to extend years 11 and 12, while others looked at a partnership kind of model as I illustrated before.

We invite expressions of interest, receive those expressions of interest back, accept them and work with those schools over the coming 12 months for the 2017 start. I am really encouraged by what Rokeby and Rosny might look like, for example, in two or three years' time. We have students we really value going on to years 11 and 12.

**CHAIR** - What about Queechy and Kings Meadows?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is up to them. I have invited them all to express an interest in the extension and it will be up to the communities along with their schools to decide.

**CHAIR** - Surely that would start to undermine the college system? It would have to. If you are offering years 11 and 12 in urban areas, it would have to take numbers away from the colleges?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Not necessarily, but they have not expressed an interest. We are working with the schools who have put up their hands - Clarence, Rosny, Sorell District School, for example. We want ideas of how it can work. It is all about the kids. What is best for the students is the number one thing. That is my motivating factor. Some schools, like Ulverstone High School, will put up their hand and go for the direct 11 and 12 extension at the school while others will work more in partnership. The target for this policy is students who would not have ordinarily gone on to year 11 at a college. If they feel more comfortable staying at their school that they have been at since year 7, or in the case of Yolla District High School, for example, since kindergarten, then we should provide them with that opportunity.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am a product of the state system and you could say that is good or bad when you look at me. I came from Dunalley and went to Dunalley Primary School, Clarence High and then Hobart Matric. If I had not left Dunalley I think my horizons would have been totally different, my networks would have definitely been very different, and I might not be where I am today. I also understand that there are those in the system whose parents might not be able to afford to send them to a city school - say from down Tasman way. I can understand that, but what concerns me with the urban high schools is whether it is going to undermine the capacity of Rosny, Hobart or Elizabeth colleges from delivering those points of excellence that they do deliver, and the performing arts is one of those and I think you would have to agree with me that they do a fantastic job. There is no way that at, say, Tasman our kids going to year 12 are going to be able to experience that opportunity to be a part of performances like that and to have their horizons broadened. I understand the difficulties here -

**CHAIR** - And your question is?

**Mr VALENTINE** - How do we protect that capacity to deliver high-quality subjects that are really focused, such as the performing arts? How do we protect that if we are going to introduce a level of mediocrity, if I can put it that way without trying to be too derogatory? It tends to bring things back to mediocrity.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, I reject that. There is absolutely no mediocrity at all in these extension schools or the subject offerings. What will protect colleges is more students, having the critical mass to support our colleges and our high school extension schools, and in partnership. There is no reason a student can't do some subject offerings a couple of days a week at a certain high school and another subject offering at another time of the week.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Across the wire, do you mean?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It's about flexibility.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you talking about telecommuting?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, physically or through videoconferencing. I went to Newstead College 15 months ago and was involved in a class where kids were sitting in St Helens

High School participating in a Newstead College class and the videoconference was great, clear and audible, and the kids were clearly engaged. Technology is only going to get better and improve. This policy needs the colleges and the schools to work together.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So the colleges aren't going to be disadvantaged in this, is that what you are telling me?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, they're not going to be disadvantaged in this. In some ways they could be strengthened, in fact, by looking outside the square and seeing what might be possible. How do we work better with our high schools? The data I released last week was sobering. Anyone who thinks we can look at that data and not change is doing the future generations of Tasmanians a massive disservice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I can understand your comment there. The last part of my question goes to those students doing VET courses associated with colleges and who might not get to the end of the year 12. They go off to complete VET training. Are they being counted in as if they are completing, if you like, year 12 standard study? Is that the reason our numbers are low, if they are not being counted? Perhaps you can clarify that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I might ask my Secretary to say a few words on that because the department are undergoing a nine to 12 curriculum review which incorporates VET to get a better understanding of how we can improve.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is just in relation to years 11 and 12, and that is the only reason I am raising it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Would you like to comment?

**Ms GALE** - VET results do count towards TCE attainment, which is the answer to the question you asked.

**Mr VALENTINE** - When you do the count and look at the number of students that are attaining year 12, you count VET students as well?

**Ms GALE** - Yes, for the TCE achievement, which is our completion data.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Regarding the students 11 and 12 in high schools, do you consider that it is a lesser qualification when you consider that the courses that have been offered in years 11 and 12 are not the same course that are being offered at somewhere like Launceston or Newstead College? You are getting a qualification, but are you getting a lesser qualification?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, you are not.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - You are not getting the same courses?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, they are all the same courses. If you do something at high school or at college, they are the same courses.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - You consider they are?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Absolutely, in the breadth of courses you can offer. If you talk to UTAS about school visual performing arts, for example, if you do not have the number of students you cannot offer a course. So there would be a lot of courses you cannot offer at the high schools that you can at the colleges.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - But level 3 English at Smithton High School is the same as what might be offered at Hellyer for example, so the subject offerings are the same.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Apart from the breadth?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, that will be guided by student demand. So in Huonville, for example, there is a particular focus working alongside the aquaculture industry. So some of the subjects may be tailored towards certain areas or regions.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - How many students would you need then at a high school to have a course? That is one of the issues.

**CHAIR** - It is two at Tasman.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - This is the thing. How long can you maintain that? If you are going to have your specialised teachers, are you going to get a teacher that specialises in a certain course if they only have two students? How long can you maintain something like that in the high schools? Will it be continuing? Is there a limit to say that we are not continuing here because students prefer to come into the city, as Mr Valentine said, for a number of reasons? They do not want to stay in the area they are in. So is there a certain number of students that are required or will continue to be required, otherwise you are going to find it is not viable and you cannot get teachers. It is a bit like the hospitals not being able to get doctors.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Katrina Beams is here, Executive Officer of TASC. They audit all the subjects, whether it be in a college or a high school. The offerings will be driven by student demand and the resource will be applied accordingly. I have just visited Campbell Town High School spoken to a young person who would not have gone on to year 11. He sees a real future in his community by looking at some horticultural and agricultural offerings because irrigation infrastructure has enabled the surrounding in the community to transform its agricultural landscape. In driving up from Hobart to Launceston, you would have seen the cherries there on the left hand side of the road. That young kid has got a part-time job there and is also engaged in an agricultural subject at Campbell Town.

[10.00 a.m.]

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - That is wonderful, but with respect, it is not the question I asked. The question I asked is: will this be ongoing? If you cannot maintain the number of students at the high schools to get specialised teachers - and we know now that even in the high school, teachers who are not qualified in a particular subject are teaching those subjects because you can't get them - will you be able to get speciality qualified teachers to teach year 11 and 12 if they are teaching a small number of students? Will years 11 and 12 continue in schools if you continually have small numbers and not enough students doing it? I appreciate

that some students are getting great benefit from it but will it continue if the numbers are not there and if you cannot get the specialised teachers?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it will continue. First, it is driven by student demand.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What if you don't get the demand?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it will continue because the increase in technology enables access to specialist teachers.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So it may all be by video conferencing in the future if you cannot get specialist teachers?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It all depends on the subject and the demand in the particular area. Video conferencing is becoming increasingly important in terms of school communities, irrespective of extensions to high schools. Technology will enable us to have access to specialist teachers and overcome those geographical barriers.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So in 11 and 12, there may be video conferencing. Are the teachers you currently have teaching these speciality subjects in 11 and 12 qualified, or are they a bit like some of the teachers teaching subjects in high schools but not necessarily having a specific qualification?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - All teachers are qualified.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Yes, but I am talking about a specialties in 11 and 12 and some of the subjects we have mentioned.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. When it comes to the offerings, we support the school to run a year 11 and 12 program. If a student wants to remain in their school community and have access to a specialist teacher in a college, then video conferencing enables that. This is about colleges and high schools working together. We are in the twenty-first century.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I understand. Sometimes it is very difficult for teachers to teach a subject that they are not right across. That is unfair on teachers at times.

**CHAIR** - I am going to invite two more questions on years 11 and 12. We have spent one hour on this. I know it is an important area, but other areas are equally important.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have two questions, one on 11 and 12, and one on -

**CHAIR** - You will get your one on 11 and 12 and you will get your other one after that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I did not interject before but you were talking about schools coming forward to participate in these reforms and school communities wanting to be part of this. What do you plan to do with schools that don't come forward? Potentially, you could have some urban high schools and communities that have a high proportion of their students who go to grade 11 and 12 and colleges might not want this imposed on them. What are your plans for those kids?



**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The Chair asked a question about Kings Meadows and Queechy High School, for example. They have not put up their hand for an extension opportunity because it is a community-driven change. I am not forcing schools to participate in years 11 and 12. I have made that very clear right from the start. The policy objective over a 10-year period was to have subject offerings at all high schools. That does not say that every high school has to extend in isolation. I am not forcing high schools to participate. This is a community-driven change that we are supporting by resourcing our high schools, encouraging the Department of Education resources, and encouraging the collaboration schools with colleges. The level of interest exceeded my expectations, which is why I opened it up in October last year.

**Mr WILLIE** - You must have a plan for the schools that resist this change?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My plan is to get as many kids completing year 12 as possible. My plan is for Tasmania to lead the nation in education. If we think that we are going to expect different and better results from doing the same old thing then we are kidding ourselves. We have to change. We have to work with communities to ensure that they can adapt to change. I will not be forcing schools against their will to go to years 11 and 12.

**CHAIR** - We are going to come back to the Better Schools. You have made your point. The last question specifically on 11 and 12, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - We have had a system in Tasmania that kids in Tasmania would go through until they were aged 17 or they had to have a job.

**CHAIR** - So many hours of work.

**Mr DEAN** - They had to have that. I want to just go back to where I was before. Newstead College has dropped off a number of students this year. Both Lilydale and Port are both feeder schools to Newstead and LC in the main. Would you agree, minister, that if we continue to see a further drop off in Newstead and LC that it could be an indication that there is an impact on the colleges of continuing these regional schools to 11 and 12?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I wouldn't concede that at all. Launceston College has increased their numbers. I point to the example again of the Huonville and Hobart College increase, which is the main feeder school. There are various reasons. There could be smaller grade 10 cohorts in Lilydale and Port Dalrymple. This is about kids who would otherwise not have gone on to years 11 and 12 doing so because the barriers have been lifted.

**Mr DEAN** - You keep saying that they would not have gone on, but they would have had to had a job or certain hours of work to have not gone on to years 11 or 12 or until they turn 17. Did that position fail where we had them continuing on until year 17?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The challenge we have particularly struck me when I went to visit Ulverstone High School. While they had a reasonable apparent retention into years 11 as soon as they turned 17 they were out of there, bang, gone. That is the challenge. If you are asking me a direct question, has our policy of kids being able to leave at year 17 failed? Absolutely it's failed. That is why we are changing the act and want to change the act.

**Mr DEAN** - That is the first time I have heard that, but anyway that is good.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The whole point is to ensure that our act in terms of extending the leaving age is 35 hours per week, which is the ABS statistic of a full-time job, or training, so cert. 3 at TasTAFE or completing or turning 18, for example completing year 12. The previous policy of governments around the age of 17 has not served us well and that is why we are making changes. I make no apologies for reforming education because the data demands that this state wake up and change the way we are educating our kids. If we do not have the fortitude for change we are doing this state and future generations a great service.

**CHAIR** - Obviously \$1.48 billion in education and training in this Budget is substantial. I want to drill down into the \$134 million for the Students First funding. We have \$98 million for the government sector. We have \$36 million for the non-government sector. Does this represent a per capita distribution? How is the distribution of funding determined?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it is determined in terms of the original, I call it the Gonski model of \$134 million, a commitment we made prior to the last election to commit to the full six years of Gonski. We have done that, it is a total of \$34 million. The Gonski is a formula methodology I firmly believe in. It is supporting our schools based on need, whether it be a demographic need, schools in disadvantaged areas, it accounts for students with disabilities in schools, location and the like. The distribution is based on the Fairer Funding model. The data was also presented in last year's annual report. We are working from the same funding distribution model, effectively, as was signed up to by the previous government, the Gillard government and the Giddings Labor-Greens government in Tasmania. We are working on the same model of funding.

**CHAIR** - Is it per capita distribution?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. The Gonski model is very much a needs-based model. The non-government schools struck a deal with the Gillard government about their funding. They source the majority of their funding through the federal government. Our Gonski model is based on student numbers and when it comes to government schools it is based on need.

**Mr WILLIE** - I am interested in transparency, again. Minister, what is the combined Tasmanian Commonwealth funding for government schools from 2014-19 for the Better Schools Funding? For each year, however you do it, calendar year or fiscal year?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Okay. So in terms of Students First Funding, additional accumulative funds, Gonski, \$77.8 million in 2015-16, \$87.4 million in 2016-17, \$84.9 million in 2017-18.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are they combined?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, \$81.4 million in 2018-19 and \$85.7 million in 2019-20.

**CHAIR** - Where would my \$98 million come from, then?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The six years of Gonski is the State Government contribution - \$98 million to government and \$36 million to non-government.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is an observation around the Gonski funding. Prior to the Gonski funding, is it true every high school had two less teachers and every college had four less teachers as a result of cuts made prior to Gonski? This is my first question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, it is not true.

[10.15 a.m.]

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Is it a fact that this Gonski funding that is now coming in is simply filling that gap, rather than actually extending the amount of resources available to teachers in the high schools and colleges?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, we are ensuring that when we apply a resource to schools through Gonski it is based on need. Gonski got it right in terms of needs-based funding, and we are true to the Gonski objectives, if I can call it that. David Gonski absolutely got it right, and it works for Tasmania in particular when you look at our high level of disadvantage compared to other states of Australia. We welcome that needs-based funding.

There was an additional \$21 million last year, and that included areas such as our new LIFT program which was \$5 million of that \$21 million going to the 80 primary schools most in need. On a needs basis, you look at the socioeconomic status of each school environment and 80 schools were earmarked for that resource, which is a kindergarten to grade 2 literacy and numeracy and parental engagement initiative. My early feedback on that is that it has been very welcomed by schools and parental engagement is very good and it appears to be going very well, albeit it is only into the second, almost third, term.

**Mr VALENTINE** - My question was just about the high schools and colleges, not about primary.

**CHAIR** - We are not at early learning yet.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you saying that prior to Gonski there were not any cuts to teacher numbers in high schools and colleges?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There were a number of savings by previous governments.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In your government, I am not talking about previous governments.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The last two budgets of this government have not required any additional savings from Education, whereas in the previous seven years, as I understand it, most budgets required savings in Education. Last year's was the first, and this year's Budget again, where no additional savings have been required in terms of FTEs from Education.

**Mr WILLIE** - This relates to Mr Valentine's question. When you read out those figures before, you missed the 2014 year. Are you able to provide the combined total for Tasmania and commonwealth needs-based funding for 2014?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will have to take that on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - The methodology of the needs-based funding goes through the school gate. Can you confirm that money has not been spent on departmental agendas?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Like what?

**Mr WILLIE** - Mr Valentine was talking about plugging holes in budgets.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, \$134 million of Gonski funding, as agreed by the previous government, has been delivered. The methodology around that, how those funds should be applied, was struck by the previous government. We are being true to our word when it comes to the matter of insuring the distribution of those funds, in that it goes where required. That might be through workforce development, which I believe is very important, or professional development that in my view is very necessary. Teacher training and teacher quality is very important.

**CHAIR** - I am sure the honourable member agrees wholeheartedly.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am sure he does as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I certainly agree with the Gonski funding, there is no question about that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The funding has been spent in line with the previous heads of agreement signed by previous governments. We have not deviated from that.

**Mr WILLIE** - What about LIFT? LIFT is a departmental agenda. Is there Gonski money going to that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - LIFT is absolutely Gonski funds because LIFT is distributed to those 80 primary schools most need of it. There are five key areas: quality teaching; quality learning; meeting student needs; empowered school leadership; and transparency and accountability. This is the heads of agreement between the commonwealth and Tasmania on national education reform signed by the previous government. LIFT is a great initiative that brings in parents and kids aged four years to eight years, or kindergarten to grade 2, to develop literacy and numeracy skills. That is going to the 80 schools that need it most in terms of where those schools fit on the needs index.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, in your opening you talked about \$600 000 going to 13 groups. Could you elaborate on that please?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, I can. This is for the 26Ten grants being distributed. We are still in overview so I can come to that in the output group.

**CHAIR** - Where were you hoping to look at that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can do it now. It's fine.

**CHAIR** - Yes, do it now and then it's done.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thirteen organisations across the state have been awarded \$600 000 under the latest 26Ten grants program. You would all be aware of 26Ten, the adult literacy initiative. Under the 26Ten grants program grants of up to \$50 000 are available to employers, community groups and industry. They have been awarded to the National Disability Service; Houston's Farm; Launceston City Mission; St Vincent de Paul; Starting Point Neighbourhood House; Emmerton Park and TasTAFE; Wide Angle Tasmania; TasNetworks; JBS Australia Meats and TasTAFE; Burnie Community House and TasTAFE; North West Football League and TasTAFE; Tasmanian School Canteen Association; and Good Start Early Learning. These grants will support employers and peak bodies to assist their paid and voluntary Tasmanian workers to improve their literacy and numeracy skills and build an understanding of adult literacy issues in the industry.

**CHAIR** - How are you assessing the results of that funding, minister? Not just numbers, in actuals?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In how it is supplied to those?

**CHAIR** - No, how are you assessing the outcomes of that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, 26Ten would be evaluating the exercise. When I visited Harvest Moon, a recipient of 26Ten funds previously and working in the vegetable industry with a generally unskilled workforce, it highlighted to me the importance of literacy and numeracy in terms of occupational health and safety when they are working with large equipment and machinery, farming equipment and tractors, and how important it is for the workforce there to be literate around the operating procedures and those types of things. It has a particular value when you highlight the safety of employees, and Houston's Farm is in a similar circumstance to Harvest Moon. To see it in action was excellent. It is very good.

**CHAIR** - What about through the canteens? How do you assess the value of giving money to canteens?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That's done at arm's length from me. Evaluation is embedded into the funding applications. There is an evaluation requirement from those organisations that receive those funds.

**CHAIR** - Is it possible to have a copy of an evaluation to know how it is being assessed.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We can provide some criteria for that. We might have to take it on notice.

**CHAIR** - We have a huge interest in some of the finer details and I know Mr Dean is going to head to straight to it. I have one around the number of teachers on stress. I will pick up if there is anything left over from Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - I just wanted to look at truancy which is a cause of concern, particularly in some areas. Kids and students are refusing to go to school and/or cannot fit into the traditional school programs. I commend you and the department for a pilot program, which is being looked at in the northern suburbs and at Launceston. What is happening in the area of truancy and absenteeism in schools? If I could encompass into bullying programs and cyberbullying in particular, which seems to be the in thing?

**CHAIR** - Take their phones off them. I know how to fix that in schools.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Nationally in 2015 school attendance rates for students in years 1 to 6 was 93.2 per cent. Our state figures match that of Australia. Attendance rates for each term in 2015 showed an improvement over the rates recorded in 2014 for all terms except term 3. In 2015 attendance rates for students in prep to year 10 across the school year declined by 0.4 per cent over the 2014 figures. This decline can be contributed to the extreme weather conditions, snowy days experienced in term 3. We all remember that. The department's strategy is to follow up unexplained absences with parents who are working with proportion of absences that remained unexplained by the end of the school year declined by 2 per cent in 2015 over the figure reported in 2014. All schools have an attendance retention strategy as part of their operational plans and is actioned in schools. As observed in previous years, the most common reason for student absenteeism in 2015 was illness.

**CHAIR** - Who is dragging the numbers down? Is it the little tackers or is it the older ones.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - High schools it would appear. Mr Dean, I can probably have a look in more detail if you would like me to.

**Mr DEAN** - It is an important area.

[10.30 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Student engagement is where it is all at. For a number of reasons students struggle to engage, with their personal circumstances and the like. Schools work very practically on a school basis and individually engaging with kids, providing them with meaningful learning and ensuring that the school environment is safe, inclusive and responsive to their learning. I commend all school principals for that. Quality assured, community-based re-engagement programs are funded through the Learning Services to meet the needs of those students. The funding is determined on \$8000 per enrolment FTE, which is allocated after the first term census. In 2015-16 additional alternative learning funding totalling \$443 000 was transferred to the Learning Services to provide additional funding for re-engagement programs and this would apply in 2016. Learning Services South received \$787 000 and Learning Services North \$810 000. These re-engagement programs like you refer to, reframe students perception to the value of learning, re-establish productive working relationships and provide pathways to re-engage with learning to achieve valued outcomes. The department is always working with schools to ensure all those programs work well. We have been briefed on the discussion in terms of compulsory conciliation conferencing around students attendance will help as well in terms of those changes. It is a really proactive start rather than the big stick approach the act currently has, bringing in the parents or guardians and carers into a whole-of-community strategy to ensure the kids stay at school is a worthy model which is why it is in the draft act.

On cyberbullying, I agree with you, this is a really important subject. I have seen evidence of how destructive it can be to vulnerable young people, such as teenagers. It is young people with access to mobile devices.

**CHAIR** - Why is there not a policy that no school child needs a phone at school? Why is there not an overarching policy? Why do schools get to decide who has a mobile phone policy and who does not?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Can I talk about the operational matter and perhaps Ms Gale might -

**CHAIR** - Can we tighten them up a little bit too?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, we can. We are introducing the overarching bullying program in schools commencing in 2017, Mr Dean. This is a \$3 million initiative. It will cover all forms of bullying - race, LGBTI, cyberbullying, and I have had particular engagement with the Alanna and Madeline Foundation over the last 12 to 18 months.

I have a particular focus on cyberbullying and this builds on the work of Professor Donna Cross, who visited Tasmania in April 2014. You might recall she held a number of forums around Tasmania with educators and parents. She did a forum in each region talking about bullying, particularly focusing on cyberbullying. The strategies we learned from Professor Cross, in terms of the Department of Education, we incorporate in the overarching respectful relationships framework that schools have but we are particularly resourcing it in this Budget with the \$3 million resource covering all bullying. There is a particular focus on cyberbullying because it can be horrendously destructive to young people.

**Ms GALE** - Each school has their own mobile phone policy and part of the reason for that is mobile phones are part of the ongoing changes to technology that are around us. We want to see schools working with their young people to make sure they are used appropriately. It is not just with mobile phones but all of the other digital devices that our young people have these days.

It is more important that our schools play an educative role in the use of those. If we ban mobile phones one day there will be something else with technology next we need to deal with. We are making sure that we can educate the proper use of those technologies.

A number of schools use iPhones as part of their teaching methodology so students can access data information using their phones. It is a part of everyday life and our view is that we are better off educating our young people in the appropriate use rather than banning.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you explain what the relationship is between the Department of Education and the third-party providers like Beacon. Apparently you engaged them for transitioning from higher schools to jobs. Can you just explain a little bit about that? I am interested because I wonder if that is working against year 11-12 retention, and whether we are getting benefits out of that money. I am sure Beacon is fine foundation; do not get me wrong. I am not suggesting for one minute they are not doing good servicing; I am sure they are.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Beacon would say that the transitioning to jobs is really post 11 and 12. They equally are very committed to improving 11 and 12 retention and completion. Our schools have been engaging with Beacon I think for up to 25 years. They are playing a key role now. Last week it was great to announce a partnership between the Ramsay Foundation, Beacon and the state government as well. Beacon originated in Tasmania; it an organisation that is now in other states.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know the gentleman that started it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Very good, and it works well.

**Mr DEAN** - At Brooks.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Brooks High School is a very good example. In 2014-15 the government provided a funding commitment of \$675 000 over three years to Beacon. That is of course matched by the Beacon Foundation themselves, to deliver a program in partnership aimed at tackling youth employment. The funding was provided through the Department of State Growth. In September 2015 a memorandum of understanding was developed between the Department of Education and the Beacon Foundation, committing both parties to extending levels of cooperation and collaboration. An additional budget allocation of \$1 million over four years will be provided to Beacon Foundation to facilitate the development of links between schools and industry. Strong school and industry links are a key component of the successful implementation of our new career education for kindergarten to grade 12, called the My Education Initiative.

In particular the Beacon personnel will support all Tasmanian Department of Education schools containing students in years 10 to 12, and make connection with local or national businesses, as you have identified, Mr Valentine. It will assist the target schools to deliver work exposure programs for students, and work on behalf of schools in the management of events, relating to career awareness or career connections. One officer will be employed to support northern schools, and one officer in the south.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do they provide statistics on what they are achieving for [inaudible] or the department?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They would; if you would like those statistics I can provide those for you. We can provide those when we receive them, bearing in mind the program has not been going for that long.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am just interested in how it fits in with the whole vision, if you like, and the achievements there.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It fits in well with that retention, completion and job-readiness vision of the Government. Last week I was with the Beacon Foundation at Rokeby High School, which does a great deal of work not only with Beacon but also with the University of Tasmania in terms of pathways beyond year 10. It was to announce effectively a \$15 million initiative, where \$5 million is from state government funding, \$2.5 from State Growth and \$2.5 from Education. They are getting a \$10 million philanthropic contribution from the Ramsay Foundation, as an extraordinary example of partnership. It is a pilot program over five years. They will be particularly focusing on six high schools in greatest need, if I can put it that way, that would value that work transition program to its maximum extent. That will be evaluated by the Underwood Centre, so it forms part of that evaluation exercise as well. I want to commend the Ramsay Foundation for what is a significant contribution to education in Tasmania. We will learn from that contribution and build on the good work of Beacon already.



I can provide an example of Yolla District High School, which works in partnership with Beacon. It is working through various business blackboards and work exposure opportunities and it comes with a partnership. In 2016 the school has already hosted several businesses focused on financial literacy, a high impact program for work readiness, and a planning a career on wheels day where businesses showcase their jobs and roles in a car park type of expo setting. The school found that the opportunities offered by the Beacon Foundation sit well with the requirements of the My Education curriculum. Last year the school piloted a program with a forest education foundation and Forico to present learning opportunities from kinder to year 10 around the forests. It took years 9 and 10 students on a site tour from seed to fibre through the forest industry. They also offer rural health career days and partnership with UTAS in terms of career pathways. There is a district rural school looking at what opportunities there are in terms of employment in the region, focusing on those areas and building up the skill levels with industries that are closely associated with the school or the region, and working with industry to support the students to learn.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Got a lot to thank Bill Lawson for up there.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Bill Lawson, yes.

**Mr FINCH** - The Ramsay Foundation; I haven't heard of that organisation before. Have they just come on the scene?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The Paul Ramsay Foundation is a \$3 billion philanthropy fund. He gifted this amount of funds to distribute. It is extraordinary. Beacon, to their great credit, have worked alongside the Ramsay Foundation and spoken to us and we have come up with a collaboration exercise. It will be very interesting to see the evaluation from that over that five-year period.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is a table on page 21 with performance information, and it is to do with Aboriginal students. I am looking at 2014-15 actuals and at year 3 reading for Aboriginal students, year 5, year 7 and year 9. There is quite a heavy fluctuation there in percentages. I know it is explained in the notes, but I don't quite understand the fluctuations there. Is it that the student numbers are so low that those percentages are really very easily set higher?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is right. The numbers are so low that at this scale -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is it possible to give me some numbers there overall? I will take the answer to that question on notice.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - For context we can probably provide some -

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is just that numeracy doesn't follow it and it seems to me a bit odd that the numeracy is 4.7 to a top of 6.4, and then we have in this reading 5.7, 10.5, 5.9, 10.6; it is quite a marked difference there.

[10.45 a.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Ms Gale will provide the answer to your direct question, but I have some numbers here for you, Mr Valentine. This is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

student enrolments from prep to year 12. It has grown every year since 2011. I am not going through all the numbers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We only need year 9 really, but you do not have them separated, I suppose.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not have them separated. We could probably do so. In 2011 there were 4690 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments from prep to year 12. There are now 5367 in the 2015 figures. The non-Aboriginal student head count is 50 713. It has declined. In 2011 it was 52 375; it is now 50 713. The percentage of students who identified as Aboriginal in 2011 out of the overall population was 8.2 per cent. This has steadily increased every year - 8.4 per cent, 8.8 per cent, 9.2 per cent and now 9.6 per cent.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You can understand this, as people discover their lineage. It is easier for them these days to find those links.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - For reading, it is so erratic in the percentage below the national average. Yet for numeracy, it is not flat. Is there a brief explanation for this?

**Ms GALE** - It could be flipped for next year. We have such small numbers of Aboriginal students in each year group. If you are working from 13 years of schooling - and I think it was 5367 - it means we have somewhere from 400 and 500 Aboriginal students per year group. It takes a handful of students to be able to change in their ability, and that would affect the percentages above and below. It is because it is a very small number. Next year, it could be the other way around. It depends on student ability in each of the strands as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - But the difference between reading and numeracy; it seems there is no similar fluctuation in numeracy.

**Ms GALE** - No, but next year there could be. It is very volatile data.

**Mr VALENTINE** - On the numeracy, not only reading?

**Ms GALE** - Yes. It could be either way.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, I will look for it, out of interest, next year.

**Ms GALE** - Next year, it will be interesting to see if there is a trend.

**CHAIR** - I am happy for you to take these questions on notice, Minister. Teachers identified on stress leave - there were 62 last year. Can we have the numbers for this year? Can I have the number of teachers in each band and also the principals' salaries in bands?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - So, you are after salary information?

**CHAIR** - Yes. I am happy to take those on notice. I do not need you to provide them now.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have some stress information for you now, if you would like. I will be brief. There has been an 11 per cent decrease in the total number of workers compensation claims received. It was 426 as at the 31 March 2016 - down from 481 at 31 March 2015. A total of 44 stress claims was lodged. It was a 29 per cent decrease from 62 in 2015. Out of the 44 stress claims lodged, 10 were disputed and not compensable. As of 31 March 2016, a total of 30 claims have been accepted. Four claims remain pending and under investigation.

**CHAIR** - What about the number of teachers who are off on sick leave or stress leave? Do you drill down into that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Are you talking about the difference between workers compensation and stress?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Is that available?

**Mr WILLIAMS** - No, it would not be available in the sense that if a person takes sick leave, most doctors do not write the reason on their medical certificates, so we don't know.

**CHAIR** - So we don't know how many teachers are taking leave due to stress-related issues?

**Mr WILLIAMS** - It has decreased in terms of stress-related workers compensation claims.

**CHAIR** - The salary bands? I am happy to take those on notice. I am after the bands, particularly for the principals and how to work out what is normal. Is it under 100 students? There must be levels of principals. How many of those principals are in active positions? That is another general piece of information the committee would like to have.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We can provide that information for you.

**CHAIR** - Are there any other questions in relation to general items because we need to go to our break and get into 1.2.

**Mr DEAN** - Domestic violence is a big issue with this current government. The impact of domestic violence on students within the school - is that showing up? Another question is about domestic violence leave. Is that being taken advantage of by anybody within the department at this stage? Is there any leave taken in that area?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Domestic violence is a whole of government policy rather than the Department of Education. Personal leave can be taken, as I understand it. I stand to be corrected.

**Mr DEAN** - The reason I have asked the question is that I have spoken to some of the principals - and I won't identify them, obviously. However, domestic violence situations are being shown up in school for some students and it is causing some concerns.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I don't doubt that and I will be guided by what principals tell me. I have visited many schools and I always have frank and respectful conversations with principals across a whole range of subjects including this one. The principals themselves and school leaders and school communities will be interested in our Safe Homes, Safe Families budget commitment as well. It is relevant to your question, because, as you well know, family violence can have a devastating impact on the children and have consequences for our young people. We need to do all we can to improve that.

The Department of Education is responsible for implementation of three actions under the Safe Homes, Safe Families plan. Under action 2, the department will develop a respectful relationships resource and school implementation package to be delivered in all government schools from kindergarten to year 12. Through this action, children and young people enrolled in Tasmanian government schools will have access to respectful relationships education. It will support them to build respectful relationships throughout life and will support attitudinal change to family and violence. Professional support team - action 6 of the Safe Homes, Safe Families, is to support children affected by family violence in government schools and child and family centres through the provision of six additional professional support staff right across the state, so there will be three psychologists and three social workers. These staff will provide practical support to schools and provide access to professional support for children and young people in government schools.

**Mr DEAN** - I want to know the numbers of students the psychologists would be working with at the present time across the department. We know you have that in place and I am familiar with the program. I want to know how many students are under the support of these psychologists.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I don't believe we have that data. Children's behaviours can be attributable to a range of circumstances. We do not collect specific reasons for students accessing support staff, including psychologists. That would be a conversation between the psychologists themselves.

**Mr DEAN** - If we have people employed in these areas, why wouldn't we have some statistic data on what they have done and the turnaround in some of the students in this area? Why wouldn't we have some figures there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They have just recently been appointed and I am sure data would be collected as to the reasons students are presenting themselves. That is information we could well have down the track but I cannot provide the data now.

**Mr DEAN** - How do we know it is needed?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - You have demonstrated a need by talking to principals.

**Mr DEAN** - But if you can't mark it against something, how can you identify there is a real need for it?

**Ms GALE** - The schools now use a data collection tool called 'Triple S' in which they keep quite detailed information about individual students and what their needs and circumstances are. That is confidential, it is at school level, and at the school level they would have that information about what their student needs are. Anecdotally and from what

we are told, there is increasing need to support students through social workers and school psychologists and schools have that data themselves. We don't collect that at a system level.

**Mr DEAN** - So the Education department doesn't have those figures but the individual schools do.

**Ms GALE** - The schools are in the Triple S system and currently we don't aggregate that up at a system level. It is quite detailed and more along the lines of case notes and so on. The system is there for supporting students and not as a data collection method. We could potentially investigate whether we could apply that in the future, but at the moment we don't.

**The committee suspended from 10.58 to 11.14 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - We have enough members to make a start. You had a question in this area, support services, Mr Valentine?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I am happy to run with that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Members, thank you very much for returning.

*Members laughing.*

**CHAIR** - Can I invite Mr Valentine to start in 1.2 School support services?

**Mr VALENTINE** - It was just in regard to, I presume this is where to ask it, English as another language. Support services for schools. I do not know about you, but I go around a lot of schools in my electorate around the Christmas awards time. It seems to me we are getting a greater percentage of migrant children in the schools. The multicultural nature of our schools is definitely changing. I ask the minister to comment on the resourcing levels over the past, say, three years, and what is expected to happen going forward with regard to English as another language.

Talking to individuals, I think stress levels seem to be up. Quite a number of those children have very little English. Their families at home do not necessarily speak English either. I am interested to know what the focus is on that. This would go through to even TAFE courses. It goes across a couple of areas. One answer at this point would be good, to know what is happening in future. There is a fair bit of stress.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thanks, Mr Valentine. We can look at the TAFE question when we scrutinise TAFE. As of April 2016, 467 students from diverse ethnic backgrounds were supported by the EAL program. Students enrolled in school state-wide any time during the school year, with a majority located in Hobart and Launceston. The 467 figure is a 2016 figure.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do we have any understanding as to the levels of those who cannot speak English at all?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would say they have a very limited capacity to speak English. In April 2015, there were 594. There is a big increase between 2014 and 2015 because in 2014 there were 487. It has come back to 467 as of April 2016. In terms of the reduction in levels of funding, however, it has increased, it appears. So in 2015, it was \$3 852 407, and in 2016, \$3 889 558 is going into English as an additional language program.

We have seen an influx of temporary migrant students in 2016 - 62 largely in the south, with a reduced number of humanitarian entrants, 336. Support in schools is provided by EAL teachers, multilingual teacher assistants and teacher assistants trained in working with newly arrived students. Our professional learning sessions are delivered throughout the year for classroom teachers and teacher assistants. Assessment and reporting on student achievement is conducted three times a year. It was quite a big increase in 2015. I visited some schools where this topic of conversation came up. There appears to be a reduction to 467.

Currently 72 per cent of students supported by the EAL program are humanitarian entrants settling permanently in Australia under the Australian Government's Humanitarian Settlement Strategy; 13 per cent are permanent residents or Australian citizens who are experiencing difficulty with literacy as a direct result of living in a home situation where a language other than English or restricted English is spoken. One per cent of students are in community detention or holding bridging visas. The remaining 14 per cent are temporary residents who may be required to pay annual tuition fees to Government Education Training International - GETI - to offset the cost of general education expenses. The new arrival students enter the Tasmanian government school system from kinder to year 12, usually arriving at their local school where support is provided for assessed needs. EAL programs are provided in schools with larger numbers of arrivals of EAL students. The program students are costed to maximise the EAL program support - for example, Cosgrove High and East Launceston Primary School - and in schools with smaller numbers of English language learning students, the students receive individualised support. Longford and West Ulverstone Primary School are examples of that.

EAL program instruction, years prep to 12, is provided through a co-teaching support model where EAL program teachers share the teaching workload and assist class teachers with pilot programs. The EAL program supporting kindergarten is provided through general or multi-lingual teacher-assisted hours.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there any review? Do you review that level and how it is going? How do you get feedback through the school system about how successful the support is in helping in the classroom situation? Some teachers might have three or four children who have very limited English, if any, and it is very difficult when you have 24 children you are trying to teach them and you have three or four who cannot speak the language.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. The department engages with the schools. I engage with the schools and I went to a school in Mr Dean's electorate, Invermay Primary School. We had long discussions about EAL programs; I will find those figures for you. There was an increase in the number of teacher assistants assisting the students so the resource was allocated with the increase in the number of students.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I imagine the high schools may be a big problem. That has given me the information.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is this the appropriate place to ask about the Severe Disabilities Register? Minister, could you tell me how many children were added to the Severe Disabilities Register in 2015, as opposed to how many children were added in 2016?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can provide those figures for you. In 2016, there are currently 977.3 FTE students on the Severe Disabilities Register.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - For 2015? Did the figures go up or down?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will take that on notice for 2015 figures. I am sure we can access those for you, but in the overall budget, Ms Armitage, the total special needs budget is \$75.99 million in 2016, so it is effectively \$76 million compared to \$71.9 million in 2015. Students supported through the Severe Disabilities Register were allocated \$41.4 million from the total special needs budget. Additionally they are up to 1 500 students in 2016 with cognitive capacity of between 55 and 70 IQ with \$75 000 each to their school, with a total budget of \$7.5 million.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Has any planning been done to phase out the Severe Disabilities Register? This is part of the national work happening at the moment under the national consistent collection of data where the whole of Australia is looking at different ways of funding for severe disabilities and moving to the kind of funding allocation that is more related to the teaching adjustments that need to be made for each child and not a medical diagnosis about disability. That is work that is currently underway and states and territories are thinking about what the implications of that might be.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - For the students as well?

**Ms GALE** - Yes, for the students. For example there is a meeting tomorrow between people in Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia to look at the implications of moving to a different model. That is ongoing work and it is happening nationally.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Still on the severe disability register, has the criteria for that been changed in any way over the last 12 months.

**Ms GALE** - No.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mrs Armitage, I have some 2015 figures: 959.1 FTE; the previous figure I gave for 2016 was 977.3. I was just saying the 2016 figures were 977, the 2015 figures were 959.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I have that so there has been an increase. Do we know how many new children were listed on the 55-70 IQ register in the last 12 months?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can find that information for you.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - And also how many were removed from the register in 2015-16? New children coming on and how many others went off.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will take that on notice.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Just a couple more questions on disability. Could you also tell me how many mediation sessions did Life Without Barriers staff conduct in 2015-16?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will take that on notice.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Also how many complaints did the department received from families of students with a disability in 2015-16?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will take that on notice as well.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The last one about disability services, how many students with a disability were suspended in 2015-16?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will take that on notice. We will see if we can find that for you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Madam Chair, on a point of clarification. Regarding your Standing Orders, just asking the questions and me saying yes, we will find an answer on notice, does that suffice rather than writing in down. I believe you have to write it down in the lower House.

**CHAIR** - The secretary makes a note of all the questions asked and you receive a letter first thing tomorrow asking for the answers to those questions.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I wanted to make sure we got all the information that was required.

**CHAIR** - It is the most efficient process in the parliament, our secretary. That is on the record.

Minister, I have a question in relation to students with autism. I believe there is a review of a current pilot model at the Lindisfarne North Primary School.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There is a new program.

**CHAIR** - Is there some sort of new program or a review, or it is being evaluated and that would obviously have input into what is rolled out in other areas. Can you give some update on that and also what liaison does the department have with an organisation like Giant Steps at Deloraine or the autism specific early learning and care centre at Burnie that have a huge amount of expertise accumulated over a number of years in this field?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - To answer your first question, we are piloting an autism specific class which is attached to a local school in the south of the state at Lindisfarne North Primary School. That was a commitment we gave prior to the 2014 election and we are delivering on that. As required, of course, an evaluation is being conducted by KPMG in collaboration with the Department of Education on the benefits and outcomes of the pilot program. This will be available in Term 3 of this year and the outcomes of the evaluation will inform any further extension of the program across other schools in the state. A trial of the Rethink Autism program was introduced in Tasmania as part of our commitment to students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.



**CHAIR** - And your liaison with Giant Steps or the Burnie centre?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We have 6.5 autism consultants who keep up to date with the learning across various sites. I will ask Trudy Pearce, who is from Learning Services, to talk about Giant Steps and the program in Burnie.

**Ms PEARCE** - We work collaboratively, and we have a number of students who are enrolled at both the autism centre and Giant Steps, as well as at government schools. There have been occasions when the staff have joined together for professional learning.

**CHAIR** - It makes sense to use valuable resources already there.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - On a slightly different tack, I opened a professional development course the other day for Downs Syndrome Tasmania in collaboration with the Professional Learning Institute in Launceston at Riverside. That was also across all school sectors, either government or non-government.

**CHAIR** - Can I take your focus to Learning Services? I am interested in the staffing numbers for the three regions.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is now two regions: Learning Services North and Learning Services South.

**CHAIR** - Where is the great divide there?

**Ms PEARCE** - Campbell Town remains in the Learning Services northern region. We have 108 schools and colleges in the northern region and 103 in the southern region.

**CHAIR** - So the north has just outdone the south?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Not being parochial, are you?

**CHAIR** - No, I represent the south as well. Do you have the numbers? How is that new arrangement working, given there is such a vast number of schools to coordinate around what Learning Services support is given to the schools they look after?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are 31 FTEs, an increase of seven on the previous year. In terms of FTE, that is an increase of 7.45. That is the whole of the state.

**CHAIR** - Given there are more schools represented in the north, would there be a higher number of staff in the northern office? Can we have a break up of those numbers?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We can provide that for the member on notice.

**CHAIR** - Around the support services, particularly guidance officers and speech therapists and the like, can I have the break up there as well? That is, the numbers available to the north and the south?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is for staffing level at 30 March 2016 - professional support staff head count: speech and language pathologists, 57; social workers, 72; school psychologists,

78. Professional support staff head count total figure is 207. There are 107 in the south and 100 in the north.

**CHAIR** - Even though there are more schools to be represented in the north?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not sure of the student proportion. That would probably influence it.

**CHAIR** - So it is student numbers rather than schools?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Professional support staff in terms of FTE, 156.26 in March 2016, and in March 2015, 152.33. In terms of FTE, 81.15 in the north, and 75.11 in the south. In terms of the FTE distribution, there is a greater amount in the north. I have the split in the learning services support here, Chair. In the north, the FTE is 14 for the athletic services; the principal network leader is included, and that is three. In the south, it is 11 learning services and principal network leader is three.

**CHAIR** - In relation to the literacy and numeracy programs, I believe \$330 000 per year over three years was allocated to an independent review of literacy, teaching training and practices in government schools. Can I have an update on where that is?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Sure. I might refer that question to the secretary.

**Ms GALE** - That review will be undertaken in conjunction with Peter Underwood Centre. We have just started to work with the Peter Underwood Centre about what that will look like over the three years.

**CHAIR** - So we do not have anything yet?

**Ms GALE** - Not yet.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Slightly backtracking, about autism.

**CHAIR** - Apologies for not asking if there were other questions.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, no problem. There is some concern in the community that home schooling is going to be attacked with the review of the Education Act. People with autistic children are getting concerned there will be a really bad outcome for their children. Do you have any comment on that? Can you perhaps allay any fears?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I understand the concern; members would have received some representation on the matter.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I have. No doubt everybody else has.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Absolutely no - home education is not being attacked. I would argue that it is in fact being strengthened. For example, the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council does not actually exist in legislation, but it will be in the new legislation. In many respects home education will be strengthened as part of the Act.

The other important thing is that the existing system has weaknesses. As the minister responsible for every child's education - whether they are in a non-government school, a government school or Catholic school or are educated at home - I am not satisfied there is enough accountability in the home education environment. Now, the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council has supported our changes. We have had some feedback from the community that we should strengthen the changes, if I could put it that way, or should listen to what changes could be made to the draft legislation to satisfy those concerns.

I believe we can come to some arrangement to satisfy those concerns, particularly as they relate to home-schooling children with autism. The consultation period was long and comprehensive - it began in September 2014, with 231 submissions, and ended in December 2014; we had 17 forums, including 12 public forums, and a further 500-odd pieces of feedback were provided - because we wanted to get ideas of how the draft legislation could be made better.

I am open to that. This is part of the process. Home education is, and will always be, a choice for parents and students, but the level of accountability has to be increased to ensure children who are home-schooled have a quality education environment. That is what is the most important to me.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is fair enough. You would be aware of some examples of the treatment of autistic children in state schools from that communication from the Autism Association. Do you have any comment on those?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am aware of some media reports in 2011 - and I stand to be corrected on that, but a number of years ago - around this issue. Children with autism and their families are treated with the utmost respect from all people within the Department of Education, particularly principals and teachers. In terms of home education and feedback on that, I have written to all home educators, absolutely allaying all the concerns they might have with current changes to the Act. I have received feedback from home educators saying, "Look, we support what you are doing because it strengthens home education and ensures it remains a viable choice." Part of the change is ensuring that some of these kids have the opportunity to participate in mainstream schooling as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There were concerns about the mainstream schooling, with kids being bullied on buses and in the playground and the like. I presume high schools and primary schools are being updated with what is appropriate in terms of how these children are dealt with on a daily basis?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Absolutely. Every concern raised with me or with individual people within the department by parents or carers about the education and treatment of their children will absolutely be followed up to the Nth degree. That will always be the case.

**Mr VALENTINE** - One concern was about a child being locked in a room so they could be controlled. That was not appropriate.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I think we are talking about some of Roger Law's comments in the media. I think what he was referring to is a pen. He was referring to 2010 - I mentioned 2011 before - and he was attacking the previous government for constructing the pen. It is not a pen; it is a fence and it was a crucial safety measure for students. There is a road

nearby, and the fence was necessary to stop the kids going onto the road for their own safety. The fencing was a priority request of the school community to ensure student safety.

### **1.3 Early learning -**

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you have assigned only \$6.295 million to implement the lower school starting age and an increased finishing age. Can you detail what this will pay for? How much of this funding is dedicated to the reduced starting age? Will there be additional funding available if this is not enough? What initiatives will this pay for to accommodate the bubble age group that will go through in the first year? Will there be additional funding provided for support staff to accommodate younger children in school?

**CHAIR** - It has not passed the parliament yet.

**Mr WILLIE** - No, but there is an allocation for implementation in the Budget, Chair.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie, it is a good one. The funding of \$6.295 million is a half-yearly effect. It does not take account of the whole 12 months. As you would appreciate, it is the full calendar year from January to the end of December. My understanding is that this is a financial-year effect so if you double that, effectively they are getting close to the \$15 million I was speaking about previously. That will ensure, essentially, the cost of the bubble effect - that 6-month bubble - but we had to dot a lot of 'i's and cross a lot of 't's between now and 2020, or when the policy comes into effect should it pass the Parliament.

We are engaging with the early childhood sector now on some of their concerns, but also with the non-government sector in terms of their needs as well. We are engaging absolutely with the government school environment to ensure we have the infrastructure and resources in terms of teachers and support staff to ensure this change is comprehensively resourced, with additional resources and resources that will be applied to both the early learning environment and the compulsory leaving age as well.

I can guarantee that whatever resources are required as a result of that change will be made available and will not be required from existing resources. There will be additional resources.

**Mr WILLIE** - If there is not enough, will there be additional resources?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, this has to work - it will work - but we have to be sure that the human resources and the capital investment are applied to ensure the transition caters for that increasing number of students. You might appreciate that it is not just the first year, but that bubble effect - as I am sure Mr Willie appreciates - will go on throughout the whole 13 years. Effectively the bubble will finish in around 2033. Mr Willie might still be in parliament when it finishes. It is not that far away.

**Mr WILLIE** - Quite significant infrastructure spending will be needed to cater for that bubble, will it not?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, but as we demonstrated with the year 11 to 12 extension, we delivered on what infrastructure was required, and we will deliver on that in the future. I

think the member would appreciate capacity in schools as well. Certainly modification of existing areas and classroom size will be required.

**CHAIR** - Day beds or something for them to have a little kip.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. There is a facilities review underway - it is happening now. That across the non-government and government sector, and we will be prepared for this change should it eventuate.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have one question around staffing. Minister, in recognition of Tasmania already providing kindergartens, an exemption in staffing ratios to children in the under-five age group was negotiated with the Commonwealth. Will this need be renegotiated as a result of the change in school starting age?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - A good question. I have spoken to Simon Birmingham, the federal Education minister and alerted him to the changes we are proposing because it will affect federal government resourcing. The federal minister agreed and thanked me for letting him know. This was prior to the release of the draft legislation.

**CHAIR** - And he said the money was there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The money will be there. The federal government has to support additional students.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, it is interesting to hear you talk about the new education Act and the home-schooling situation. You may have heard of one of my constituents who has 10 children he and his wife are home-schooling.

**CHAIR** - And no TV.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Can you repeat that, sorry, Mr Finch?

**Mr FINCH** - I have a constituent who has 10 children; he and his wife have 10 children they are home-schooling.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I think I might know the story.

**Mr FINCH** - You may know the story, yes.

You have touched on the subject of the earlier starting age, and I wonder if any guide or notice is being taken. The Scandinavian countries are changing their policies, or they have policies, to stop children from having formal education until they are six years of age. Finland might be an exemplar of having a highly successful system that starts children at a later age. Would you care to comment on that, please?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a very different environment in Finland in terms of socioeconomic status and a whole range of socioeconomic factors. You cannot compare our situations in many respects. I might say we were being quoted starting ages of seven in Finland. My understanding is that they are coming back to six now, and are reducing their compulsory starting age. As of 2015, compulsory years of schooling in Finland were

changed to six-to 17-years from seven-to-16 years. Finland remains among the top performers in the PISA 2012 results, although with decreasing performance in mathematics, reading and science across the PISA cycles. Sweden's compulsory school starting age is seven. Sweden's PISA results have declined over the past decade from around average to significantly below average. No other country taking part in PISA has seen a steeper fall than that.

**Ms GALE** - PISA is the Program for International Student Assessment.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is an important point, and perhaps Ms Gale might be able to also explain this in terms of where Tasmania sits. My understanding is that with the PISA indicator, our students are tested in the rankings when they are 15 years of age. In Tasmania, our 15-year-olds receive a year's less schooling than our mainland counterparts, on average. If you look at Tasmania's results in terms of the PISA table and the age group 15, that is why we might not perform as expected. Our kids have had fewer years at school than their mainland counterparts. The objective of this change is to ensure that our students in Tasmania are around the same age and the same grade as every other state in Australia. It cannot be put more plainly and simply and importantly than that.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, have you considered childcare centres and the impact lowering of the starting age will have on their numbers and the employment opportunities for people who work in childcare centres?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have, and we have had strong engagement with the early childhood sector. I met with them last week and I have spoken to individuals as well.

**CHAIR** - Are they coming around then? They were very anti when the announcement was first made.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will let the childcare sector representatives speak for themselves. I am interested in supporting and ensuring there is a sustainable transition to the new change. We must be driven by what is in the best interests of the student. Surely that must be the number 1 factor across any change we made. By extending the minimum compulsory starting age and the leaving age, we are strengthening universal education in Tasmania. That is what this is all about - extending the years of universal education in Tasmania. It is an issue of equity.

It is not fair that our students in Tasmania on average receive less schooling than their mainland counterparts. There is nothing fair or equitable about that. In 2015 58 per cent of three-year-olds and 53 per cent of three- and four-year-olds participated in a childcare benefit-approved education program. The ability to participate in that quality early learning environment correlates with your ability to pay for it. With the modelling we have done, that 58 per cent would increase to 77 per cent by lowering the minimum compulsory starting age. It is an equity issue for me. Those in areas of disadvantage will benefit most by this change.

**Mr FINCH** - I am assured you are aware of the problem at the childcare centres.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, sorry.

**Mr FINCH** - Take the Exeter childcare centre, whose managers have written to me today. They are very concerned about the reduction of services they will be able to offer. They have had a tough trot from the Global Financial Crisis through various impacts on their service. As long as you are aware that the impact is going to be on the numbers who will be attending childcare centres.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mr Finch, I am absolutely aware of that. That is why we are doing the regulatory impact statement. That is why the Treasury is tasked with that, as with any legislation that impacts, and on businesses in particular.

**Mr FINCH** - Yes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We want to know the full effect on individual businesses. When we take into account the regulatory impact statement and the feedback from that, it will inform our thinking on how we will assist that transition.

**Mr FINCH** - If you have not heard from them before, I will encourage them to forward - they have done the numbers and have built a strong case.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr FINCH** - I will get them to forward that through to you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have seen numbers presented to me before. I am more than open to understanding any concerns that people might have regarding this change and the impact on their businesses. I accept that, but I will be driven by what is best for all children.

**CHAIR** - It sounds like there is some compromise available, some wriggle room.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Minister, I notice the revenue for early learning is going to drop by around \$200 000 in 2015-16, from \$5 815 to \$5 639. Why the reduction, and what areas of early learning will be affected? I notice it then goes back up, so there is a bit of fluctuation going down a couple of hundred thousand, and then up a hundred thousand the following year.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That reduction affects effectively a point in time. At the time the Budget funding was not known for the National Quality Agenda for early childhood education and care. We now know that it was \$300 000 -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Have you been able to drop the \$200 000?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Which is a National Partnership Fund arrangement.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - On page 21 of the Education budget paper 2, volume 1, looking at kindergarten children and the percentage of children meeting the kindergarten development check, I noticed it is trending downwards. In 2012-13, it was 75.9 down to 74.5, 74.1. Is there any concern about that? What is the Government looking to do? I see you have 77 as a target for 2015-16, but it has been trending downwards for the last few years.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, it is very small amounts.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It is still trending though. Is that satisfactory, in your view, or should you be investing some more money in this area?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What are you doing to try to get back up to 77?

[12.00 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Good question. I am a very big supporter of the child and family centres. I have often recognised that the previous government's very good investment, worthy investment in the child and family centres, and I have visited most of them, if not all. They are a wonderful example of parental and community engagement and that link to education. It is heart-warming to see.

I also listen to people who evaluate child and family centres. The evaluation I received in terms of resourcing for child and family centres by Dr Sue Jenkins highlighted the fact that they do a fantastic job, but more resourcing would be absolutely welcome. That is why we have allocated to each child and family centre an additional one full-time equivalent. That can be flexibly applied to the needs of the centre. Some might apply that resource to 0.6 of an educator and the rest to a child psychologist, or various examples of how you might make that resourcing up. More resourcing is going to child and family centres.

Launching into Learning is again, a program I commend. In many respects LIFT, Learning In Families to develop Together, builds on the LIL program, which has more resources as well. With a combination of child and family centres, resources for LIL, our LIFT program and our early learning indicators, I am confident we will increase -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Those percentages will improve. What evidence do you have that the Government's decision to lower the school starting age to four-and-a-half will improve literacy outcomes?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Quite a lot of work has been done. Much of the evidence that supported the Launching into Learning is a very good basis as to why we would lower the minimum compulsory starting age. If I look at the work from Mustard and McCain, for example, which I have spoken about before, it is Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain, who said:

The message of the early years study was clear - if we truly wish to provide our children with an equal opportunity to maximise their potential, whatever that might be, it is vital that we do everything we can to enhance their early development. Early experiences establish the architecture of the brain and the development trajectories for learning behaviour and health of individuals and populations. Coping abilities, competencies, health and wellbeing are strongly influenced by the mutual circuitry that develops as a result of the intricate interaction of genes and the early environments and experiences.

The CEO of Early Childhood Australia stated that we lagged behind other countries in our participation of three-year-olds in early learning and that research is now telling us that



two years of participation in quality early learning is what is really important, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**CHAIR** - If we had 58 per cent of the little tackers that have been going to the pre-kinder courses, how does the four-and-a-half year start going to improve those figures? You said 58 per cent -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is right. That is those families who receive a childcare benefit and therefore send their kids to child care.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is that age under three-and-a-half?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Remember, kindergarten is currently four. There is pre-kinder in a childcare centre, LIL or child and family centres, and family day care, so we want to increase participation in that quality and early learning environment for more children. We want to do it publicly at public schools. Investing more in public schools to increase universal access for quality early learning. It does not seem to be a crime to me.

**CHAIR** - Explain to me how reducing the compulsory start age to four years and six months is going to improve the three-year-old participation?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, you will be able to attend kindergarten at age three-and-a-half years, rather than four. That brings them into that quality early learning environment, play-based learning as kindergartens are, but a little earlier. You can go to families and the kids and quality early learning, and that is what we want to achieve. At the moment, there are too many barriers and one is the low minimum compulsory starting age.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is it not almost taking it out of one bucket of money and putting it in another? Instead of paying child care in one way, we are having them at school.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is not taking any funding buckets out.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It is changing which bucket it comes out of, is all I am saying. At the moment children aged three and under are part of the 58 per cent who are accessing child care. You said they can access money for three and under? Whereas if they are at school at three, obviously those parents will not be being paid child care; it will be coming out of the education budget. Is it moving the deckchairs?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, it is not moving the deckchairs because that is a *Titanic* expression.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I did not say the *Titanic* - I avoided that. It could have been deckchairs on a cruise ship. It does not have to be the *Titanic*.

**CHAIR** - This is a very serious subject.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is increasing the state investment in our universal education system by lowering the minimum starting age, compulsory starting age, by just six months to ensure our kids are roughly the same age and same grade as every other child around Australia.

**CHAIR** - We are going to have this debate in a more fulsome arena at a later time.

**Mr DEAN** - I want to go back to lowering the age and an extra year's schooling to compare with the other states. Are our curriculums identical with those currently operating nationally? It is all very well to have a year earlier, but are our curriculums aligned with what is happening on the mainland?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We have the national quality framework.

**Mr DEAN** - Some teachers will tell you some of the curriculum they set themselves and it is a guide. Some curriculums will differ from others. I am wondering how much flexibility there is in that area.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - All teachers are different in terms of how they apply their skills in the classroom within the Australian curriculum, but all use the Early Years Learning framework. That is the guide; there is national consistency.

**Mr DEAN** - That is checked off with NAPLAN and all of that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - On service delivered through the family centres, you are right - they are an excellent model in my view. A good example is George Town. Rocherlea will move forward shortly with a new centre there. Are the numbers accessing these centres increasing? Where are we with families coming into these centres? Do you have any statistics on that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, we would have, but probably not with us today. I get the impression they are well utilised services, and increasing. I am not sure if I have the hard data for you, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - You can take it on notice. I would like to know because you see the same families at the centres when you go there, so I want to know if it has increased.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In terms of the annual Census data during the Census month of August 2015, 15 892 visits were made to child and family centres, which is an average of 55 visits made to each CFC every day. That explains why they are busy when you visit them.

Eight out of the 12 CFCs had one or more days with greater than 100 visits. In total 289 programs were offered in child and family centres, and on average each CFC offers 28 programs and 60 per cent, so 9 927 of the visits were made to early learning and play-based programs.

**Mr DEAN** - Do we have the figures for Ravenswood and George Town?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Do you want individual figures? I do not have them.

**Ms BURGESS** - Every child and family centre has its own data, and they keep it and regularly update it. Lynne Wylie-Watson at Ravenswood would have that data at her fingertips and has it over the last 12 or so months. She would use that to inform her planning.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, as you know over many years, probably decades, I have been an advocate for life education. That is working in every state and territory except Tasmania. There is a service here, but they are trying to get some traction with the Education Department. They cover off on the issues age appropriately - on nutrition; exercise; resilience; respectful behaviours regarding bullying and violence; cyber safety and appropriate social media behaviours; alcohol; drugs, both illicit and legal; tobacco; and general health such as SunSmart and Stranger Danger. That list of things life education deals with are the sorts of things I hope our children in schools are embracing. Are you confident that without life education, our schools are addressing those areas of concern?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am confident. I point to the discussion we had with Mr Dean around cyber-bullying before, and some of our overarching bullying strategies. I know the Department of Education promotes best practice in all areas of health and safety. We are supporting the important work the schools do already. You spoke about a number of initiatives - providing the *Respectful Schools Respectful Behaviour* booklet to all teachers, providing for a professional learning base on the National State Schools framework, and developing digital support material. We are open to collaborating with other organisations. We have spoken about Beacon, and this Budget also contains an initiative for the Smith Family, which is very good. The Smith Family has been doing some terrific work in schools. We have established a grants program to provide seed-funding for schools to develop sustainable partnerships with community organisations in one of the following focus areas - healthy school canteen accreditation breakfast clubs; kitchen garden or agriculture initiatives; physical activity initiatives; drug education; and relationships and sexuality. That grants program will be established. Schools will always choose whom they would like to engage and participate with in the areas on offer. A grants program may well be available to a life education organisation if they apply for it and go through the right criteria.

**Mr FINCH** - If I were to encourage them to come again, the people in life education, they would not be wasting their time?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would not like to waste anyone's time.

**Mr FINCH** - They have tried three occasions previously, with no traction.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have met with them, and everyone gets traction when they visit me. Budgets do not always extend to provide every single person with their wishlist, unfortunately, but with a number of new budget initiatives, such as the ones I have just referred to, there could be an opportunity for life education. We would be willing to meet with them and see how they might offer their services to schools. At the end of the day, it is the schools that choose to partake in those services on an individual basis.

[12.15 p.m.]

**Mr FINCH** - It is more in terms of financial support, maybe in the Budget or something like that. I note the money that other states are putting into life education - \$2 million in New South Wales, recurrent every year; in Queensland, \$1.5 million annually for three years; in the Northern Territory, \$640 000 over three years; and in Victoria, \$375 000 annually for the next two years.

They recognise the efficacy and importance of life education through the age-appropriate years. Life education delivers and covers off on these issues.

**CHAIR** - We have four areas to get through in about 20 minutes. Thank you; that point was point well made, Mr Finch. Can I move to 1.4 Statutory Offices?

#### **1.4 Statutory Offices**

**Mr VALENTINE** - I will try to make it as brief as I can. I notice there is a drop of \$358 000. I am presuming this is related to the cessation of the TQA Board. You might care to correct me if I am wrong there.

With regard to that drop in budget, and then going forward, there are slight rises going out to 2019-20, which propose to take into account inflation. You might want to comment on that, Minister. Is the drop mainly to do with the TQA Board?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My understanding is that lower overheads have been applied to the output and TQA had some trust balances previously that have been reduced. I will get Katrina Beams, the Executive Officer of TASC, to come to the table. Chair, I have some domestic violence figures for you.

**CHAIR** - We will keep them until the end.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Okay.

**Ms BEAMS** - As the minister outlined, they are the key contributors to the drop in the budget for the Office of TASC.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I notice the Auditor-General having a few comments to make about getting financial reports in on time. There was specific mention of the 31 December to May 2016 costs. You have now submitted those - correct me if I am wrong. How do they compare with past costs for this particular function?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will refer this to Katrina, as separate from Department of Education.

**Ms BEAMS** - Yes, those outstanding statements for the closure of the former TQA finances have been submitted to the TASC audit office, and have been cleared and signed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We do not have those yet. How do the costs for that five-month period compare?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We attributed to the change from TQA to TASC an annual saving of \$700 000.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The operational cost? What I am trying to get at is the cost to the department operationally - the communication with schools and the development of new curriculums and the like. I know you do not have any board costs any longer. What about the actual costs of doing business - is that improving or not?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is totally separate from the department.

**Ms BEAMS** - The costs allocated to the Office of TASC have been sufficient to run our business as usual. There has been more than enough in the Budget to ensure that all those things that occurred previously can continue to occur. We have identified a number of efficiencies in our business that we hope to be able to implement over the next financial year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are the personnel assessing the course sitting in judgment on their own previous work? Now that the TQA Board has gone, are the people now doing that task different from the people who developed the courses?

**Ms BEAMS** -Yes. Under the legislation, Curriculum Services in the Department of Education has responsibility for developing the relevant courses. They then have processes in place to make sure they have consulted widely with a range of stakeholders and that the course has been developed in accordance with both the state and national standards. That is then provided to the Office of TAS for accreditation purposes. We have our own processes to ensure that the courses that come to us meet state and national standards.

We have a very strong partnership with Curriculum Services and actually meet with them fortnightly to make sure we have really efficient and effective communication between the office as an independent statutory authority and the Department of Education.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do we have individuals assessing courses they previously developed? Do we make sure the assessment is pure?

**Ms BEAMS** -Yes, we do.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, that is all I need on that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There has been an improved level of communication with schools. I think that is in addition to what Ms Beams was saying about the principal reference group as well. TASC was a great opportunity to bring together a whole range of stakeholders and to achieve a common goal of ensuring skilled and innovative Tasmanian students. That has worked effectively and the team has done a terrific job. I have visited it on a number of occasions in the last six months, particularly leading up to the end of the 2015 year. It has done a tremendous job over the course for last 12 or more months since it came into operation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is fine. I guess the proof of the pudding will be in learning whether the profile of Tasmania, compared with the other states, is inferior. That is my concern.

Just moving on to the Teachers Registration Board, one of the other statutory offices. I am interested in the number of teacher performance and behaviour incidents brought before the board. I believe the board plays a role in that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Teachers Registration Board?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Does the Teachers Registration Board actually deal with performance-related issues with teachers, or not?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Behavioural-related issues rather than performance? I have some numbers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am happy to take the numbers on notice.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - What numbers are you after, particularly?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am interested in how many references have been made to the board in relation to behavioural problems and what the general nature of those references is. I am not interested in drilling down to individuals or the role they play.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will get those figures from the board itself, but I can take that on notice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, take it on notice.

**CHAIR** - When will teachers' registration for Tasmanian teachers be recognised? When are we going to have nationally consistent recognition for teacher qualifications? Where is it in the big picture? We have nurses and plenty of other professional areas where our qualification is recognised around the country, but we do not have teacher registration or qualification. Where are we?

[12.25 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The board works with other ATRA members and AITSL to increase the consistency of registration processes across Australia. The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are used as the basis for a range of registration processes. The board is working with ATRA and AITSL to implement a national accreditation of initial teacher education courses in Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - I heard all of that last year. When are we getting there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - To gain accreditation, a course provider must demonstrate that its graduates will meet the graduate stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers at graduation. AITSL is putting into effect the Government's response to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group report into initial teacher education and making teachers classroom-ready.

**CHAIR** - It sounds like we're a long way away.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Not really. These are effectively statutory authorities.

**CHAIR** - If we are all teaching the same curriculum right around the country, we have NAPLAN and we have all these national consistent requirements, why are our teacher's registrations and qualifications not recognised interstate?

**Ms GALE** - I am certain they are recognised, but the registration processes are not the same across Australia. Our teacher qualifications are recognised in other states and territories, just as their teacher qualifications are -

**CHAIR** - You have to be registered in another state to teach once you have a registration even in Tasmania.

**Ms GALE** - That is right. It is the registration processes that they are working towards to get a national approach. In terms of our teachers being recognised, they are, but they do have to go through a separate registration process. That is what they are working towards.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Can I reverse that a little bit? Is it still the case that if a teacher who is qualified in Tasmania does their first or second year on the mainland and then comes back to Tasmania, those years they have done on the mainland are not recognised and they have to start from scratch?

**Ms GALE** - That is correct.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - That is the reverse thing really. It is not saying our teachers are not recognised. It is the teaching interstate that is not recognised by our state. I have been told by teachers who have done that and have had to go from scratch and do their probationary year or two. Can you tell me why that happens?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Their TCT to get -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Yes, even though they have actually done it in another state, it is not counted in Tasmania and they have to do it again.

**Mr DEAN** - Recognised prior learning, RPL.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - From our information, I am not sure that is right.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I have had it from teachers it has actually happened to - that they have had to start from scratch and they have thought "Why do we bother?"

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - From scratch?

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - You know what I mean; do their probationary and whatever you like to call it again.

**CHAIR** - Years of service.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Years of service.

**Ms PEARCE** - For a teacher to move from probation to a full registration requires them to participate and to provide a portfolio showing their capacity to teach across the curriculum in our state.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It has to be in our state? They cannot show that they have done it in Victoria or New South Wales?

**Ms PEARCE** - They could provide evidence against the AITSL standard and provide that as part of their portfolio. Their experiences teaching in other jurisdictions or states are recognised, but they must provide a portfolio to move from probation to full

registration. That is the same structure in all the other states and territories. A teacher beginning in Queensland must also provide a portfolio showing how they address each of the areas of the AITSL standards.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - We might follow up on that. I think we have a couple of teachers that we all know will qualify, and they will be very happy about that.

**Ms PEARCE** - They must provide a portfolio.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Any teachers who have concerns can write to me and I will address their issues.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Unfortunately you do not hear about it until it has happened and they have had to go through it. It is not something that is happening now.

**CHAIR** - We have 10 minutes to address Output Group 2, and we have your domestic violence numbers now before we leave education.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The figures presented to me, Chair, are that for the 12 months from 15 April to 16 March, 18 employees took leave due to family violence.

**Mr DEAN** - How many?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Eighteen.

## **Output Group 2 LINC Tasmania**

### **2.1 Information Services and Community Learning**

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I noticed \$91 000 less in the Budget. Can you advise what is missing out or any reason for that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Mrs Armitage, whereabouts?

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Page 30. I was looking at the Budget, that it has gone down almost \$100 000 in 2016-17. Is there any reason for that or is anyone missing out?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am a little unsure of where you are going here.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - On page 23, the performance information output group, in person visits, 2013-14, 2014-15 - they are going down and online is going up. Can I have a breakdown of the 2014-15 numbers across the different LINC's across Tasmania, the in-person visits? I am happy to take that on notice.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We can provide that for you, but we will have to take it on notice to get overall figures.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I am happy to have it on notice to see the breakdown between them. My understanding is that Launceston LINC has just under 300 000 visits per



annum. With the improvements to Launceston LINC, which is wonderful and there are a lot of people in there, what else is planned for Launceston LINC? Are we putting in added resources to ensure it can meet the increasing demand for the services?

**Ms RAYNER** - There are no plans to increase the resources available in the Launceston LINC. The resources allocated to each LINC are balanced against usage statistics across the whole network. While there has been an increase at Launceston, it is not at a level that is unsustainable with the current staffing.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - LINC Tasmania is one of the few institutions in society that caters for entire range of ages from babies, young children, to elderly. What are you doing to ensure it is used by a whole range of groups and how is it being promoted across Tasmania?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Promotion can have a number of forms. You would recognise the investment in Launceston, and we are spending in the order of \$1 million in Burnie, upgrading there. We want to make sure all our LINC's are people-friendly to the best possible extent. Infrastructure is a very good way of promoting that. Jenny has some other strategies in place to promote our individual LINC's.

**Ms RAYNER** - We have a central team that coordinates a range of public programs across the network and they are designed to maximise events such as Adult Learner's Week or Library Information Week, those special events during the year. They coordinate a range of activities. We also have been increasingly using social media to promote events and link online. Our website underwent a major redevelopment last year.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Given the increasing online focus, can we be assured library staff jobs will be protected? Are there any plans to cut library staff across LINC Tasmania with the increase of online services?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, there are no plans.

**Ms RAYNER** - If I could make an extra comment. We may not need quite as many people in frontline positions, although that is not currently the case, but to deliver effective online services you need people to make the online services effective. There are no immediate plans to make any adjustments in that area.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Can I also have another question on notice? Could I have a breakdown of staff working in LINC's across the state along with how many people visit each LINC? I am only asking for the in-person visits not the online and how many people are working on those. One last question, Chair. I notice that volunteer hours have dropped considerably from 2013-14 and you are hoping that will go up again. What do you put this considerable drop in actual hours of volunteer hours across 2013-14 and 2014-15?

**Ms RAYNER** - It is very difficult to assess what motivates volunteers.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So you do not ask them why they are not coming?

**Ms RAYNER** - Some of them just stop coming, so you cannot really ask them.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It is a bit like when someone leaves a job - you ask them. An exit interview to find out. It is a considerable amount. A lot less hours.

**Ms RAYNER** - We feel we are very fortunate in the number of volunteers we do attract. They enable us to extend services in ways we could not otherwise. We have not noticed the drop in numbers has affected our services to any major extent.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I understand that, but there is a drop. What are you going to do to increase it to 116 500? Is there a strategy? Considering the number went down considerably in 2014-15, your target is 116 500. It is more than it was in 2013-14, even though there has been a considerable drop. It needs to come back up. Is there a strategy to get those back up? What are you doing in the community to try to get those volunteer hours back?

**Ms RAYNER** - One of the main groups we are trying increase numbers in is our adult literacy volunteer tutors. There is certainly a concerted effort to engage with people in the community who might want to take up those roles. Other tasks tend to fluctuate quite a bit. We do promote volunteering opportunities across our network.

**Mr DEAN** - Library items that are given out - are outstanding items an issue? Sometimes it is an issue. The other question is on improper use of the online services. Previously there have been some issues there. Is that creating any further problems?

**Ms RAYNER** - I am sorry, I was not sure what your first question was.

**Mr DEAN** - It was about the items borrowed through the library. Have they all been returned? Are outstanding items causing any concerns?

**Ms RAYNER** - The figure stays fairly constant in terms of items that are not returned on time or items that are not returned completely. We have changed practices so people can pay their debts online. They have been able to do that in the last 12 months. That has made a slight increase to the number of fines and overdue charges being paid.

**Mr DEAN** - I asked this question because information was passed to me that some people were making a bit of money out of it, getting their stuff and selling it off and not returning it.

**Ms RAYNER** - If we come across any of those incidences, they are followed up. We do notify the police in cases where it is obvious people are, in effect, stealing from the collection.

**Mr DEAN** - And misuse of online services?

**Ms RAYNER** - To my knowledge, we have had no reports in the last 12 months.

**Mr DEAN** - That is excellent.

**Mr FINCH** - With the incredible interest in family history and everything connected with that - Tasmanian history at the Archives - can you assure me about that because I see a devolution in the Budget this year, very small. The forward Estimates shows an

increase. How are the staff and how has the operation been placed? Are staff happy? Are we up to speed with technology and IT, and all that they need to run that office into the future?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Absolutely up to speed with the IT. We launched an IT initiative that enables you to trace the history of families. That was probably 12 months ago. It is a tremendous resource. I commend everyone to look at that available resource. There is a capital investment contribution in the outer years of the forward Estimates for the Archive Office to ensure it has the required infrastructure to reserve these centrally. We welcome that extra capital investment.

**CHAIR** - The minister is on a tight timeframe.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In respect of the Archives Office - in the old days, they used to do microfilming and that sort of thing to reduce the level of storage required. What is the go these days? How do they handle items that need to be catalogued and archived?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Digitally.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is it totally digital? Is it scanning? Is it that the sort of thing that is happening?

**Ms RAYNER** - The Tasmanian Government has decided that all government records for preference will be digital format. That has an ongoing impact on the storage of the state's statutory record. In terms of other items collected, we still have a mix of digital and print formats and I imagine that will continue for some time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there a backlog in terms of the work they have to do to be able to put these records into a format for storage?

**Ms RAYNER** - No, we have an ongoing digitalisation program. Over 274 000 items from the collection are now available through LINC online in a digital format, and that is an ongoing process.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So the physical storage is not an issue at this time?

**Ms RAYNER** - As the minister said, the provision has been made in the forward Estimates for improved physical storage. There is a recognised need to increase that capacity into the future.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - On page 26 of the budget papers for education, it shows \$3 million for relocation of the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office storage facility at Berriedale, with work to commence on the project in 2018-19. Once the move occurs, I believe Berriedale will be used for TMAG's additional storage requirements. I also understand the backlog of unprocessed transfers, which is records deposited by government agencies and non-government organisations or individuals, is substantial and will take years of work as there are currently not enough staff at that site to process them. Are there any plans to employ more staff at Berriedale to respond to the backlog of records that need arranging so that the information is easily accessible to the public?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mrs Armitage, for this question highlighting an area of resource pressure, according to the information you have.

**Ms RAYNER** - The backlog is principally in records that have not yet been formally transferred to the Archive and Heritage Office. They are still stored in government agencies in a variety of circumstances. There would be a need for some additional resource. I anticipate this would be dealt with internally through reassignment of staff from other duties.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Hopefully it will not take years for them to be transferred.

**Ms RAYNER** - I would not like to make an estimate of that, but hopefully not.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Particularly if they needed to be accessed, that is all.

**CHAIR** - Mr Dean, on Capital Investment Programs. These are the shortest and sharpest questions and answers we will have today.

**Mr DEAN** - I cannot really keep it absolutely short. Minister, there are grave concerns about the condition of the Queechy High School. Information I have been provided by the parents association paints a very dim picture of that facility. They are saying the condition of that school would probably be unequalled of any other school in this state. Sadly, it has that reputation. I am told that it remains in the 1960s. You have visited the school recently as well, I understand. It is unheated, it is small, it is cramped, it is full of mould, it is unsuitable, it is inflexible, it has a three-quarter gymnasium. The school cannot even meet and assemble as a school unless they clean the gym out, and is about an all-day process so that they can move in and assemble in it.

It is identified to me, on my advice, as a disgrace, and yet we only have \$3 million assigned to that school. That project will not commence until 2018-19. It is abysmal. I just keep on going with adjectives. It is suggested that students are leaving that school or not coming into that school and going to other schools because of its condition. I might add also that over, I am told, 50 per cent of the students attending that school are on student assistance.

**CHAIR** - Your question is?

**Mr DEAN** - Why is it being treated differently to other schools? Other schools have received \$8 million and \$10 million and so on to update their infrastructure. Why is Queechy singled out for only \$3 million, and why is it singled out not to commence until 2018-19, knowing the deplorable condition of its facilities?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The resources apply on the basis of where it is needed most. I have visited Queechy High School. Of course, in a lot of schools you can point to areas that need improvement. My description of Queechy High School would not align with the description of yours, however, Mr Dean, but I recognise improvements can be made, which is why we have allocated \$3 million over the forward Estimates to Queechy. I am happy to engage in further conversations about what is required. I know the department particularly does this with every school as well.

As I travel around Tasmania I visit many schools, such as Tasman, which, for example, is absolutely in need of huge capital upgrades. Notwithstanding the BER funding and some science lab funding, there has been under-investment in school infrastructure right across Tasmania, which is why you are seeing whole schools receive large amounts of funds, a number of schools in Launceston, of course. Queechy has received \$3 million. We are happy to talk about how we can improve the infrastructure there, but there is a process, and the process is undertaken by the government, the SIIRT process.

**Mr DEAN** - I will certainly undertake to discuss that further and to bring the right people in to talk to the department about that because pressure has been put on me, as the member there, to do something about it, do whatever I can. I have said I will. I am not sure if too many other high schools would only have a three-quarter sized gym, an outdated gym. I will take you up on that, minister, and arrange for that with the appropriate department.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have agreed to visit the school. I have done so on one or two occasions, if not three, for various reasons. I certainly had a very comprehensive tour of the school last year, so I understand some of the infrastructure needs, but I also recognise that some areas of the school are very good as well. We need not paint too dismal a picture of the school because it would not reflect reality.

**Mr DEAN** - It is a parent association I am talking with, and they have real and major concerns.

**CHAIR** - Thank you; there is obviously an opportunity for some dialogue. I now invite TasTAFE to the table and apologise for our 20 minute overrun. You might introduce your team at the table and thank everyone who is walking out the door.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Stephen Conway is the CEO of TasTAFE and Nick May is the Executive Manager Finance and Resources, TasTAFE.

**CHAIR** - We will launch straight into questions. I will invite Mr Willie to open.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I thank all my staff in the Department of Education for their diligence and being here today.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - At footnote 2, page 125, TasTAFE shows a decrease in goods and sales and succeeds 17 due to competition on registered training organisations. What is your plan to change this around? Or is there a plan to turn this around from RTOs?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, there is and I will ask Mr Conway to speak in a moment. We are in a very competitive marketplace, which was set up by the previous state and federal governments. We are doing our best to ensure TasTAFE remains viable and sustainable.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - And appealing to students over the RTOs?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We need our very strong public provider in Tasmania for various reasons. One of those reasons is our decentralised population and areas that sometimes might, for example, suffer a loss of workforce or business. For example, in Queenstown, it may be the closure of a mine that impacts on the local workforce and the need for

retraining. A private provider might look at those small numbers and think it is not an opportunity, but TasTAFE is a public provider that is able to assist that community. That is why we need to support TasTAFE to become a very flexible competitive organisation, but we are dealing with a competitive environment.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What are we now doing to fend off the competition from the RTOs and to make TasTAFE more desirable?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - By working hard and providing the best training available in a very good environment with options for students. In a competitive area we need to align closely with our strengths in Tasmania in terms of industry strengths and key training areas in horticulture, viticulture or agriculture.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What are we doing that the RTOs are not doing? I know we are working hard, but what is TasTAFE doing to try to fend off the competition? There are a lot of registered training organisations - what is TasTAFE doing, apart from working hard and working with industries, that the RTOs are doing as well? What point of difference is TasTAFE going to offer to try to get those students back?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The quality of training is a point of difference. I will refer to Stephen, who is champing at the bit.

**Mr CONWAY** - One of the most unfortunate aspects of the introduction of the competition policy is that we found TasTAFE was competing with other RTOs for the same students. We are now working much more closely with the other registered training organisations. We realise that we need not compete for the same students who are committed to study, but try to work with people who need that assistance to realise that study is a good way to change their livelihoods and become more productive citizens.

Our marketing approach is very much one of partnerships and to have conversations with the other RTOs to ensure we do not go after the same students. We are already seeing some signs and some bounce-back in the market from TasTAFE's point of view.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is your promotional budget sufficient?

**Mr CONWAY** - The marketing people inside my organisation will always say they could spend more money. We find the best marketing collateral for TasTAFE is to ensure we pick up the good news stories of those people who complete their qualifications. We are currently in a round of graduations. I attend as many of those as I can, and there are some fantastic results. We ask those students to pass on their experience to others in Tasmania to ensure they understand training post-school is not as difficult as it might seem. We are ensuring we work through every aspect of the student lifecycle to break down any barriers to student participation.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - There have been some major changes to TasTAFE. You and I are quite aware of the graduation period that has changed over the last two or three years. There have been no ceremonies, is that right, for a couple of years?

**Mr CONWAY** - No, in terms of graduation ceremonies now, rather than have a very big-bang show in every one of the regions, we have funded all the program areas to do what

they want to do at the local level, what they think meets the needs of their students and their graduates. It is to balance off the big bang approach. We held a very successful student achievement awards ceremony earlier this year in Hobart. As part of that event, we were able to award people who gained recognition sums of up to \$1 500, which came directly from our industry sponsors and not from TasTAFE's pockets.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The open day is a very good example of promotion. The last one I went to was the Devonport open day. It was great to have a chat to the team. They were enthusiastic training providers. It was good to see a lot of people having an interest. The branding of TasTAFE is great and well publicised. We recognise we are in a competitive training environment. We have to always be out there promoting the good work that TasTAFE does.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What is the Government's commitment to the TasTAFE Alanvale Campus?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, we are committed to it.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Ongoing?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr CONWAY** - Alanvale is a jewel in the crown for us in terms of that region. We have several program areas that have established their centres of excellence at that campus. It is a conducive place to study. It is easy for students to get to and we have a whole suite of plans to expand our base at Alanvale.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, the Workplace Renewal Incentive Program was designed to refresh and reinvigorate the workforce. Could you outline the percentage of positions TasTAFE shared through this process and how many of these positions have been replaced?

[1.00 p.m.]

**Mr CONWAY** - I cannot answer the question in terms of percentage terms. What I can say is that we have, up until recent times, been speaking to staff about the Workforce Renewal Executive Program opportunities. We have seen some of our more mature staff exit the organisation. We have been really closely bound by the rules of the State Service Management Office to ensure that every position removed through a workplace renewal incentive payment is replaced by someone perhaps at a lower classification or someone who comes in and is able to do the role somewhat differently, but in a more efficient way so that it is in the pure sense of the workforce renewal.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do you have any figures on that?

**Mr CONWAY** - No, not to hand, but I would certainly be able to provide some.

**CHAIR** - I have a question in relation to the funding of the \$3 million for the training infrastructure. Can you tell me where that is going to be positioned?

**Mr CONWAY** - In terms of the recent Budget announcement? Our discussions with the Government at this stage have been to ensure that money will go into areas that are high

priority for the state. Agriculture and advanced manufacturing - I think we have a very key place there. That has been demonstrated over the last 12 months in fact - our capacity has really come to the fore, and now enormous capacity - and this was really done out of a bad news story in terms of the Caterpillar -

**CHAIR** - What areas? Is it the north-west coast?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In terms of geographical locations -

**CHAIR** - It says 'infrastructure'.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes - train infrastructure, agriculture, advanced manufacturing, wherever that is best supplied. So you want to make sure that wherever that capital investment goes, it is going to enhance the quality of training and the equipment that people train on. I imagine all three regions would put their hands up for new training infrastructure. However, we will work through that with TasTAFE to maximise that \$3 million investment.

**Mr DEAN** - Last year when we talked about agriculture courses, a lot was happening in TAFE. Last year your statement said that approximately 20 programs with 419 places for students were being delivered to meet employer needs by funding through skills funds. How has that progressed? Have all those places been filled? Has anyone withdrawn from it? Has it continued in a satisfactory manner?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Since March 2015, our primary industries and science teams within TasTAFE have delivered 48 courses to 2 123 students. There has been increased demand in animal studies, and enrolments are also increasing in production and horticulture, particularly fruit and berry-growing. TasTAFE has developed a strong alliance with the National Centre for Dairy Education, and has close and productive relationships with organisations such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Fruit Growers Tas, Dairy Tas, Primary Employers Tasmania, Fruit Growers Tasmania, Wine Tasmania and the Tasmanian Beekeepers Association as well as individual employers and the Tasmanian Division of Agriculture to assist with that course delivery.

TasTAFE has also been working in collaboration with the Education Department and Hagley Farm School to establish agricultural pathways for years 9 to 12, which will incorporate a vocational outcome at Certificate 1 for years 9 and 10 and Certificate 2, for years 11 and 12.

When coupled with science units, this will potentially attract an Australian tertiary admission rank and a score to provide a pathway to an agricultural science degree, which is in much demand. The pilot is due to start in 2017. Basically TasTAFE is very strongly aligning itself with the growth areas in agriculture. These connections have best assisted TasTAFE to work with those organisations to ensure that the service delivery and course offerings align very much with the goals of various industry sectors. It is a positive story to convey in terms of TasTAFE's good work in those areas.

**Mr DEAN** - Dairying was an interesting one, and whether or not the problems we have currently associated with that industry are likely to reflect on those undertaking the courses through TAFE. Is that likely to happen?



**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I really hope not. There are a number of offerings now from federal and state governments and companies to assist in this period of cutting prices. It does not look like the price is going to return to pre-cut levels for some time. One of the areas we have to be mindful of is the flow-on effect of such an action, such as people laying off staff. I would hope that where possible we can support our farmers to keep people who have been trained in the industry in a job for as long as possible. Of course, farm economics will determine that. We will help them deal with it.

One-on-one financial counselling also becomes critical to support farmers to assess their businesses and their cashflows for the forward months. They are going to have to milk their cows.

**CHAIR** - Or sell them, as they are mostly doing.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - At the present time, we are working with farmers to ensure that they maintain their stock levels as much as they can. With autumn calving and people drying off their cows, it will be a challenge.

**Mr DEAN** - I would suggest that up the coast at the present time, they are probably teaching their cows to swim.

**CHAIR** - We have two questions left, so the time we leave will depend on the questions and answers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I guess this is a carry-on from the previous question on education. English is another language in TasTAFE. Can you outline what sort of resources are being put to that now for adults coming into the state?

**Mr CONWAY** - In terms of English and other foundation courses, we run a fairly solid program across all of Tasmania. To ensure we teach the fundamentals of English as well as conversational workplace English, we have been running a fairly significant program that was funded through the Tasmanian Government in partnership with the Australian Council for Education Research. That program, described as Better for Work, targets some 3 000 students, or participants - they may not have been students at the time. Their command of the English language and their ability in literacy and numeracy are assessed, and we are able to then provide training for them on an as-needs basis. This program will also ensure we are better equipped in the future to understand the needs of people who come along with these challenges.

At the same time, we work very closely with 26Ten, and we are very pleased to have a recent announcement about being able to conduct English as a second language and English foundation subjects in partnership with a whole range of community organisations around Tasmania.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There are no other third parties delivering these sorts of courses? Is it just TasTAFE delivering them?

**Mr CONWAY** - I think other people are also offering such courses.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Has the transfer of Skills Tasmania to State Growth delivered the outcomes the Government wanted?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is a question for the Minister for Skills and the Minister for State Growth. I am the minister for TasTAFE, essentially. I am supporting TasTAFE in that competitive environment. In terms of TasTAFE's role in that competitive environment, we are adapting to the changes set by the 2012 national competition decision. There is about \$100 million for skills training in Tasmania. TasTAFE receives about \$70 million of that. So by far the biggest chunk of that skills funding goes to the public provider, as it should, in my view.

Your other question was about the transition from the Department of Education to State Growth. The idea of that was to align Skills Tasmania more closely with the industry portfolio and to maintain the public education skills provider in the Department of Education. So I think there is a good mix there.

**CHAIR** - Minister, I said it would be 12-and-a-half minutes past one, and we are 12 minutes past one. I apologise to the TasTAFE gentlemen for cutting short a little bit of their time. We can always ask questions in parliament and you can provide the answers. Thank you, minister, for the first part of the day. We will see you back at 2 o'clock.

**The committee suspended from 1.12 p.m. to 2.01 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back, minister. You have just the person beside you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - To my right is Dr John Whittington, the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

**CHAIR** - Who is an old hand at this.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - An experienced hand at this, absolutely.

I am pleased to provide an update on the progress of the state Government on agriculture, horticulture, the primary industries sector and water development. It is a very important sector and we came with a very clear vision for agriculture and that is to grow the farm-gate value of agriculture tenfold to \$10 billion by 2050, and we are well on-track with that.

Agriculture is a key pillar of the Tasmanian economy and at present we have an annual farm-gate value of \$1.44 billion. While we need to invest in areas that support this growth, I am very mindful it has been an extremely tough year for farmers and their families with the drought. We had the drought from virtually winter, spring and right through to late summer and then the cut in dairy prices, and now we are hearing of some very challenging circumstances due to the extreme flooding across the state. In that context, social support is vital and we have responded by supporting organisations such as Rural Alive and Well, Rural Business Tasmanian, the rural financial counselling service, in supporting our farmers through drought and more recently with our dairy farmers and their challenges about milk price.

This year's Budget continues the investment in strengthening Tasmania's biosecurity system. There is another \$2 million to increase detector dog teams. The Government has doubled the number of detector dog teams at our frontline, taking those from six to 12. It also enables more biosecurity officers to be employed during peak periods of demand and to station a biosecurity officer on King Island.

There is funding for Fruit Growers Tasmania to undertake industry and market development activities and we are underpinning the competitiveness of our vital poppy industry. This is on top of our ongoing investment in irrigation, agricultural research, develop and extension, farm productivity, skills, farm safety, and rural community organisations. Government is also providing more than \$2.4 million over the next four years to enhance programs and systems aimed at maintaining the quality and sustainability of Tasmania's seafood industries. This includes funding for the ongoing development of the fisheries integrated licensing and management system to maximise efficiencies for wild fisheries management, commercial and recreational licensing, and quota monitoring for the Tasmanian Shellfish Quality Assurance Program. We can also support sustainable growth by looking at the things we are already doing well and we must always strive to do better. Such a case is the expansion of the salmon industry, a major primary industry in Tasmania that generates economic wealth and employment. It currently has a farm-gate value in excess of \$700 million and plans to become a \$1 billion industry in 2030. They are plans of the industry but, of course, the Government aligns very strongly in support of that.

Ensuring that industry regulations keep pace with industry expansion and maintain community and market confidence is vitally important if we are to achieve that expansion. While the current regulatory framework has operated very effectively for 20 years, it can be improved. Firstly, the independent Environmental Protection Authority will now take responsibility for the day-to-day environmental regulation and management of all salmon farms and hatcheries, both in inland and marine waters, under a single authority consolidating the regulatory process. Marine farm planning and development functions will remain with DPIPWE.

Secondly, salmon is now a mature and major industry, and it is reasonable they help support the system that supports their growth. The Government will consult with industry over the introduction of a new levy on salmon farming licenses in addition to annual licence and lease fees. The levy will help to fund DPIPWE directly for the work it undertakes to assess industry proposals and conduct tactical research and scientific projects specifically focused on sustainably expanding industry production.

Finally, the industry as a whole has maintained a high standard of compliance with other environmental and management controls. There is a safeguard. The penalty regime for breaches of the Marine Farm Planning Act 1995 has been modernised to better reflect the scale of the industry. The Government will shortly introduce to parliament proposed amendments to the Act for a new penalty regime that will be strong deterrent. Currently the maximum possible fine for a serious breach of management controls is \$30 800; the proposed new regime will include an additional penalty calculated proportionately to the financial advantage obtained. These amendments will also see demerit points reintroduced for infringement notices, which for serial breachers could ultimately see a marine farming licence revoked. These changes are just some of the ways we are helping to support sustainable growth.

Can I sincerely thank all the departmental staff for their continued enthusiasm, hard work and dedication to the Primary Industries and Water portfolio. Together with industry, we are growing an industry that benefits all Tasmanians in all regional areas.

Just before I conclude, I want to say that the circumstances confronting farmers around Tasmania at this present time, the extreme weather conditions, are extremely challenging. Heart-breaking in many circumstances. The focus of SES personnel are on two individuals who I understand are missing in the north-west and south of the state. When it comes to this situation, the department will support families who no doubt will face the impact of what will be extreme damage to their properties and their livelihoods as a result of the loss of capital infrastructure, loss of livestock and, of course, in some cases, loss of late crops.

We have got the Agri Growth team working alongside farming body representatives such as the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Fruitgrowers Tas and Dairy Tas to assess the real impact to date. Of course the impact will become clearly evident over coming days and weeks. The damage will be significant and when you think of the challenges of farming, you need look no further than the 2015-16 season when we had record low winter rainfalls - definitely a record spring - came into a drought, got the double whammy for dairy farmers with the cut in milk prices and now a triple whammy, effectively, of floods. These are extremely challenging circumstances, and our department has and, of course will continue to, mobilised to support those affected.

I welcome the opportunity to take a few questions.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, and the committee also shares your acknowledgement of the farmers' plight. At lunchtime I heard that one farmer had lost 300 head, and that is devastating. We feel for them and we will reach that output group shortly.

We will commence, as it says in our budget papers, on 1.1 Land Title Survey and Mapping Services. I invite Mr Valentine to begin the questions.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I invite Tim Baker to the table.

**CHAIR** - We were having a chat outside, minister, and he said he had not spent all weekend cramming for this - that he was right across it, so welcome.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are going to 1.1

**CHAIR** - We will get to agri growth, which encompasses quite a bit of what the minister talked about in his opening brief to us.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It seems there is a lot of development going on in Tasmania at the moment. Maybe what I am seeing is down south, but it seems to be an increase in development. Do we have any backlogs in services being provided by your department? Any areas that are being stretched at the moment through any resourcing issues?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a very busy department, I acknowledge that. There is a lot going on, including the display of Land Tasmania at Agfest. Not sure if you visited the DPIPWE tent.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - You are right. It is a busy time and we have seen evidence of that. The property market is doing well. We are getting settlements and increases in lodgements under the Lands Titles Act in the Lands Titles Office.

We have a series of performance measures on the amount of time it takes to process applications. We are on track to meet those performance measures for this year. While it is busy, we are keeping up with the work. When it comes to things like making data available on the web to support businesses developed, we are on target to meet our performance targets.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What are the increased activities from any retained revenue as a result of the work you do in the department?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - A number of things retained revenue through the sale of products, mapping products and also through services delivered. Maybe it is best if the Auditor-General describes the services it provides.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to the table, Tim.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - There are a number of products that we sell or services that we provide which are retained revenue. I will ask Tim to speak to those. Then maybe we will speak to what it is used for.

**Mr GRANT** - In the valuation services area, we are a good service organisation. We charge our services out to local government for subsequent valuations and we undertake valuations for departmental client groups.

**CHAIR** - Real estate?

**Mr GRANT** - Not public. We deal with government agencies and provide a number of asset valuations for government agencies as well. The work there has been increasing more recently.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry to interrupt. When you say you are providing it to local government, you are not outsourcing that to be provided to local government?

**Mr GRANT** - We outsource - sorry?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, I am out of my territory.

**CHAIR** - You have moved to valuation services. We will invite Tim to stay at the table and we will finish land mapping first before we head over, so please stay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, my fault. Going back to Land Titles Survey and Mapping Services, you have quite a lot of software applications being developed in-house. Has any evaluation been undertaken of the market ability of those software applications and their underpinning systems, many of which you developed, as I say, and probably are quite

significant and may well have a market elsewhere? Have you done any evaluations of the capacity for those to be marketed?

**Mr BAKER** - You are right, Mr Valentine, a number of products have been built in-house.

**CHAIR** - For instance, TOP.

**Mr BAKER** - Yes. I would say a lot of them are well established, but they were also built specifically to meet the requirements of our Act so in a lot of cases that kind of high-level modification would be quite difficult. There are a couple of examples, which I am sure the minister will get to later, of where systems are coming to end-of-life and we are using some of that retained revenue to upgrade them. But, in the main, across jurisdictions these tend to be built for specific jurisdictions because of the unique nature of the Acts.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Has been any evaluation of whether the other states might be interested in using them, or other entities for that matter? To that end, there is the question about intellectual property, minister: it must be owned by Tasmania if it has been developed in-house. If that is the case, do you have other packages being used within the department in the Land Titles Survey and Mapping Services area that perhaps have been developed externally? If so, who owns the IP on those?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will refer that to Tim.

**Mr GRANT** - Generally speaking, when an application is built in-house, Mr Valentine, as you would know, the IP resides inside the department. That is the stated position of the Tasmanian Government and of our department. There are cases where we use third-party products but that is fairly limited. We have done our absolute best to retain IP wherever we can.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With some of those other packages, and I am not talking about, say, LIST, which is obviously purpose-built, has there ever been any thought about how that might be marketed and perhaps partnering your third parties to market that IP?

**Mr GRANT** - LIST is a good example about where we are selling our services into the private sector and it is usually in the form of data feeds. There are a number of private organisations that purchase data from the LIST as a service basis.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is the product coming out of the software package?

**Mr GRANT** - Yes, that is the product coming out. On the other side, I would need to take on notice the question about whether we have actively gone in the market to sell our IP. Again, it tends to be very specific to our requirements.

Where there are general requirements, particularly with LIST, like around a GIS site, we then tend to go and get off-the-shelf products. I can take that on notice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I would be interested in that, if that is okay.

**Mr GRANT** - Yes, I can do that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Following on from that, with any of the data sets - and you are talking about the data being provided - do you place a value on those data sets and subsequently get a return from third parties that might use those datasets? I know you have a relationship with local government, I think, and they provide you with data and you possibly provide something back. Maybe you can explain to us what the relationship is with local government now - how you share data between local governments and the department, and what other information from the data you hold, and how it is being sold on to third parties outside of the department.

[2.20 p.m.]

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, sure. I have established that Land Tasmania is very innovated in its approach and I commend the team on that in terms of property-based products and services. In terms of open data, in line with the Government's open data policy, Land Tasmania has made available 60 spatial datasets for download at no cost. The datasets are available under a Creative Commons licence. This means the data with appropriate acknowledgement can be value-added and sold as a commercial product. The datasets available include: property boundaries, topography, rivers and creeks, contours and digital terrain models. New commercial and non-commercial products will be derived from the data, and will be used in agriculture, mining and planning sectors.

I can list further products, if you like, in terms of the list products, which we have spoken of before. Land Tas has made significant changes to automate and streamline the base map that underpins List Map and the common operating platform. The Tasmanian Surveyors Register has also been redeveloped utilising the list as a portal for surveyors to renew and update their registrations, streamlining the previous administrative process. That is good. We have a number of new products and services currently also under development by Land Tas: feature editing directly with List Map and the COP, the subscription base products, improved property sales performance, mapping-based property sales products, mapping-based valuation products and a title watch service mapping alerts when particular dealings occur.

It is comprehensive in terms of the product development.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You are obviously getting revenue back from those third parties, surveyors and the like, through their registration from List. Do they buy a licence from you? So much a year, or do we know -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We do attain income. That is correct.

**Mr GRANT** - It varies depending on the type of data they use. Some are just pure transaction-based and others are, as you described it, a subscription.

**Mr VALENTINE** - My final question relates to other third party datasets like Google Earth and those sorts of things. Does the department utilise those datasets and do they pay any licence fee to do that?

**Mr GRANT** - I'm just checking and the answer is no.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - That is right, but we include those sorts of products in the List. The List is a portal, a way of seeing products so you can see Google from inside the List.

**CHAIR** - Minister, last year the Tasmanian Online Plan system, TOP, obviously was being developed and it was in the final testing stages. It was hoped to be released in 2015-16. Did everything happen with that program as expected?

**Mr GRANT** - If we can ask the Acting General Manager of Land Tasmania to come forward and talk on that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Welcome to the table, Stuart.

**Mr FLETCHER** - I can talk about TOP. We put the Tasmanian Online Plan system into production late last year. At the moment we are working with surveyors, local government and solicitors to implement it, because it is quite a complicated system with a lot of stakeholders involved in it. TOP is a workflow that allows surveyors to submit a plan; solicitors to do their work, and then that to go to the council; and then it goes to the Titles Office. Once that whole workflow is completed, it can go backwards and forwards, depending on what has to happen in the process. We are working with all those stakeholders at the moment to trial the initial implementation of TOP, and we will roll that out incrementally across the sector.

**CHAIR** - Minister, do you envisage it will be not as expensive to source titles and land mapping with this new system in place, seeing it is going to have a streamlined process into those departments?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The objective is to cut red tape and streamline the processes.

**CHAIR** - Don't forget the green tape.

**Mr VALENTINE** - As long as it is not replaced with purple policy, we will be right.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Our Government is committed to streamlined operations for all of those who utilise our services so I hope there are efficiencies for those utilising the services.

**CHAIR** - Is there a cost while we are sorting out the intricacies of this?

**Mr FLETCHER** - The extra cost in terms of utilising TOP is the cost for submitting a plan will be the same whether it is done manually or through TOP. However, it streamlines the process and is also more transparent. All parties involved in a subdivision process will be able to see where things are occurring. Even the subdivider can be involved in that and get notifications on when their plan has left their surveyor's office and gone to their solicitor or when it has gone to council or the Land Titles Office.

**Mr DEAN** - With the current changes relating to all the building legislation and the accompanying legislation that will occur, is TOP being done with that in mind - to take account of changes likely to occur in relation to planning?



**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The services offered by this output would not align much with government policy and the efficiencies that legislation may well entail. I will seek advice from Stewart.

**Mr FLETCHER** - TOP is a fairly generic workflow system. If there are changes to the process, TOP should be able to cater for a change in workflow.

**Mr DEAN** - There will be changes until they come through - one large bill that identifies a number of changes in that area, but it is a generic program.

**CHAIR** - Are there any other questions on this particular line item? If not, we will move to 1.2 Valuation Services.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Madam Chair. I start with the initiative of \$1.4 million over three years to replace the valuation information system of Tasmania. I notice it is 'being replaced to provide a stable and centralised property valuation information environment.' Does that mean it is being replaced because it has not worked well in the past? I thought when someone says it is going to provide this, it means it has not been doing it in the past - \$1.4 million is considerable.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Continuous improvement. It is a good investment.

**Mr BAKER** - The current valuations information systems in Tasmania is a program developed some 20 years ago and one that has had continual upgrades. It is very old technology and we need a newer system that will cater for change more efficiently than the currently system. The cost of operating the system is very high. The system we are developing will align a number of issues we have offline at the moment, to combine them into one usable package for valuers.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Where is the centralised property valuation? After the valuers come in and prepare valuations of property, do they input their information into this system?

**Mr BAKER** - Yes, that is correct. The system stores all property data for all rateable properties in Tasmania.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So it will make it easier to access the information from this system?

**Mr BAKER** - It will improve the access. We currently have good access. It will improve the access. It will also enable us to identify various reports we want out of the system much more easily than at present.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Will it make it easier for the valuers?

**Mr BAKER** - It will be more efficient for the valuers, yes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Will there be fewer costs for valuations for the department?

**Mr BAKER** - Basically, the hands-on valuation work will remain much the same. It is returning and storing of that data, so the administration costs will be lower, but the actual cost from a valuation point of view would be fairly similar.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Do we value every six years? I noticed last year in the budget, it was six-yearly.

**Mr BAKER** - There is a rolling valuation six-year cycle. A rolling number valued every two years, but it is correct that there is a six-year valuation cycle per council.

**CHAIR** - A bit like members of parliament in the Legislative Council.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Stage 1 of this redevelopment will include a property register, property valuations, property reporting and a stakeholder access portal. That will provide improvements for systems integration and exchange of information with local government and state government systems, which will help improve efficiencies in the way properties are managed and tracked across various tiers of government and remove the manual processing.

With manual processing results can occur with that. It is anticipated that funding for a second stage will be sought through the structured infrastructure investment review process and comprise housing information, including a register of government-owned land and government acquisitions as well.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - If it is removing manual processing, is there likely to be a loss of jobs?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We can always utilise the human resources of government so, no, not necessarily with a loss of jobs. We can always apply those resources effectively across the department.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - We are not looking to lose any FTEs?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is not the intention. Absolutely not.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It is just when I see 'removal of manual input'.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are going to engage various skill sets in other areas of this output group.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - That is right. It is just with the Government previously trying to downsize the public servants, I can see manual figures that all seem to be fitting together.

Another question I always have to ask is on capital value, land value and AAV, and a breakdown of councils and whether different councils are now requesting a different service. How many are requesting or which councils, capital value; which councils, land value; and which councils, AAV? I don't need the answer now but I would be happy to get a breakdown of what different councils are moving to under the valuation systems. I am not sure if you are able to tell me, but I am happy to take it on notice.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Okay. We are transitioning from the assessed annual value rating methodology to a two-year land value and a four-year capital value cycle. The current implementation program is being led by the Local Government Division of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The valuation and local government rating review concluded in

May 2013 and recommended transitioning from the assessed annual value rating methodology to a two-year land value and four-year capital value cycle. The Local Government Division of DPAC has initiated a project to request and support the councils to a transition to a capital value rating system.

To your question, Mrs Armitage, four councils have already moved to a capital value rating system.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Can you tell me which ones?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I can: Clarence, Sorell, Kingborough and George Town. I am advised that other councils may consider transitioning to a capital value rating system in 2017.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - What is your opinion on the flat rate system? I know that a flat rate is being considered by a couple of councils. I think Brighton has a flat rate now.

**Mr DEAN** - They are starting.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I believe a couple of other councils are considering it. Your thoughts on a flat rate system? It is still legal, I assume? Didn't we vote to make that legal a few years ago?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, we passed legislation.

**Mr BAKER** - Councils can use any of the three values we provide, land, capital and AAV or a mixture of any. Brighton has a flat rating system based on land-use codes. The residential land use has a rate; commercial and industrial are on AAV. Other councils are looking at it for next year's rating period. Some are looking at a different system anyway.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - At the moment we simply have four that are doing capital value and the rest are still on AAV, apart from the flat rates? Which are doing the land value?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - At this stage, but other councils are looking favourably next year to starting. I am not sure we can shed any light on that, probably not at this stage.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It needs to be voted through by the councils, I imagine?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There would be a process, yes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Could you tell me how many are doing the land value? Is it just two doing the land value with a flat rate?

**Mr BAKER** - No. No-one is using land value.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I thought it was the flat rate that the Brighton Council was using. They wouldn't be on the AAV still?

**Mr BAKER** - They are working on a land-use code or how the land is utilised; it is not the land value.

**CHAIR** - Whether it is residential or whether it is commercial?

**Mr BAKER** - Yes, correct.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - We are saying we have the capital, the land and the AAV. They are the three you work with. How do they work their rates then on their flat rate - are they using the AAV? It could only be one of the three, coming from you.

**Mr BAKER** - A very small portion is using AAV but they can have a flat figure per residential property.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The flat figure has to come from you; it has to come from someone.

**Mr BAKER** - No, the councils can determine what that rate will be. This is an area which the council has full control of, it is entitled to use those figures.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I am talking about the value of the property, though.

**Mr BAKER** - We provided the three values and councils can use which one they want.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So you give them the capital, the land and the AAV. Now I get it.

**Mr BAKER** - Irrespective of the method they are using, our Act requires us to provide three values on every property within the state.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Regardless of what anyone is actually using, they are all given the three. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine, did you have a question on valuations while we were here?

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, it is all right, it has been answered.

**Mr DEAN** - The question is always asked: how you do your valuations? I know that at times you have contracted in other organisations to do it and there was a lot of flak, should I say. I am going back to when I was in council.

**CHAIR** - From those mainland companies.

**Mr DEAN** - About the way it was occurring. Sometimes just to drive past. Sometimes I think they were sitting in their office just doing it on a list and whatever else - yes, Google. Has that now changed? Are we assured, when these property valuations are occurring, that it entails at least a visit to these sites? How is it done?

**Mr BAKER** - Certainly, yes, the tender documents which the contractors sign. The minimum requirement for residential properties is kerbside inspection. The commercial and industrial properties are a full inspection. Primary production properties - certainly they are required to formally enter the property and have discussion with the landowner if possible. In addition, this particular year we are sourcing information on a photograph of the major

improvement on a rural property, under a collect wrap we refer to. We can certainly establish they have been onsite to take that photograph, and also to undertake what work.

The tender document which they sign. They are still mainland firms. We have recently just negotiated tenders for the current site revaluations and the 10 municipalities are being undertaken by mainland firms. We had some interest from local firms, but unfortunately they were not successful this time. The tender documentation has minimum requirement to do a kerbside inspection for residential properties. If that establishes something in our records as incorrect, they will take a full inspection of that property to determine those aspects that need to be checked.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, were the Tasmanian valuation organisations not accepted because they could not return the work in time or was it on cost, or was it a combination of these?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That was processed at arms' length from me, so probably a combination. Tim can answer that question.

**Mr BAKER** - It was a full tender evaluation committee for each of those 10 tenders. They looked at all aspects of the return, the cost, the efficiencies and the work they had undertaken in the past, and the ability to return those figures in an appropriate timeframe was certainly a key issue. The past history that the other contractors had certainly influenced the decision to some degree. We had known histories of those firms being able to undertake the work and return the work in appropriate timeframes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Continuing on that line for a moment, do you find there is a higher value on properties with mainland valuers? They certainly work on a different property.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, I would not have thought that at all.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The only other thing is, if they are disputes by homeowners. Obviously properties can look quite nice on the outside. Owners get it and think, 'I have not got this, this, this and this.' When they put the complaint into you, does the same valuer come back, or do you have a local valuer come and do it? Who compares it if they have an issue? Do you send the valuer to have a look at the property? Would the same valuer, or the same group of valuers, from the mainland, in this case, do it, or would you have local valuers come and assess the property?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is when it comes down to the objections?

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Yes, generally objections with people saying the value is too high, it has gone up considerably, and they do not have this or other, which can be the case with someone looking from the kerbside, when something can look a lot different from when someone goes to inspect.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The Valuation of Land Act 2001 provides that a landowner, within 60 days from receipt of an evaluation notice, can lodge an objection with the Valuer-General if they believe their property details or values, as the base date, are not correct. The objection process can take some time to complete as the Valuer-General must consider and make a determination to the objection. Court processes are also available for the objecting landowner or rate paying lessee.

As at 19 April 2016, the Valuer-General issued 8 237 notices of valuation for supplementary valuations during 2015-16 financial year. Thirty-seven objections have been received, resulting in 17 amendments to valuation. That is 17 out of 8 237. Twelve are outstanding. No revaluations were issued during this period and it is a key performance measure for the Valuer-General that in any financial year, the number of amended valuations following an objection is less than 2 per cent of the total number of valuations issued. This year, amendments were made to 0.21 per cent of objections.

When it comes to objections outside a 60-day period, the Valuer-General accepts correspondence from landowners or rate-paying lessees outside the statutory 60-day objection period. However, the landowner does not have the statutory review rights that are offered to landowners under the formal objection process. The correspondence may require a site inspection and landowner interview, and the landowner or rate-paying lessee is notified in writing.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - My question was who does it? Is it the original valuer, in this case from the mainland, or will the Valuer-General employ a local valuer to go and look?

**Mr BAKER** - On the revaluations, when they are undertaken by a contract firm, it is part of the tender requirements that they come back. That objection then comes back to my office and my office then reviews the veracity of what change they are prepared to make and to establish whether it is fair and reasonable. If it is, we will accept that. A supplementary evaluation, which we undertake in-house, on an objection, we would send another party from my office to go and look at that property and to undertake a review of that objection.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Thanks very much.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Further information, Mr Dean, on your question about contractors. Both contractors are Victorian-based companies that employ a mix of Tasmanian and Victorian staff to complete valuations, and they both have offices in Tasmania.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you for that.

## **2.1 AgriGrowth Tasmania**

**CHAIR** - Can I begin by asking you about what was delivered with the cultivating property in agriculture policy? I know you told me last year that you get some feedback from Agfest, and you also said it will be taken from the farmgate value. At the time, it was \$1.19 million to \$10 billion by 2050. We do not have any measurement on the table in the table on 9.4. How do we measure what we received from that cultivating prosperity policy?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is cultivating prosperity initiatives and there is the vision those initiatives support.

**CHAIR** - We have ceased the \$300 000; that has gone out of this year's Budget.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will cover that in a moment. As to the overall vision of the farmgate value increasing tenfold, which is the vision the Government outlined for agriculture, when

we came to government, it was about \$1.1 billion - I think it was the 2012-13 year - subsequent information the following year went to about \$1.35 billion. It is now about \$1.44 billion at farmgate value.

**CHAIR** - So you have that information even though it wasn't able to be put into the budget papers?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have that information and I can provide it on notice. For your information, Chair, we are on track to reach that target. This year, with the drought and the current floods and milk prices, it remains to be seen how we can build on the momentum. What it means, to give some sort of comparison, is that to achieve our 2050 target, we need to grow in real terms at 3 per cent a year.

**CHAIR** - And we're not doing that, are we?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are on track.

**CHAIR** - The actual for 2013-14 was \$1.353 billion and this year the actual is \$1.44 billion.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The 3 per cent real term growth to get to the 2050 vision is, in my view, achievable, but it is an ambitious target. The last 20 years of growth in agriculture in real terms has been 1 per cent, which is why we have to ensure the investments we make for agriculture, horticulture and fisheries are well targeted.

The 2014-15 figure was recently published by the ABS, and that is the \$1.438 billion figure. This comes on top of near-record growth in 2013-14. The value of agriculture has increased by some \$248 million, from the \$1.19 billion I mentioned earlier in 2012-13. That is an increase of over 20 per cent in two years, but you have to look at the longer term. A lot could happen in another 20 years and you will get spikes in growth and plateauing, depending on the season at the time. I can graphically illustrate it.

**CHAIR** - Hansard struggles with graphs, so we need to table it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am happy to table that. The actual growth value of agriculture is represented in the blue bars, the growth from 2012-13 at an average rate and then the growth from 2012-13 at what would be the required rate. It clearly illustrates where we need to go. It is achievable but ambitious, but we are on target.

**CHAIR** - Still on that table 9.4, interstate food trade. If you were able to gather up the value of the primary industry sector for agriculture, can you give me the number of increase for interstate food trade that potentially is available now but was not available when the budget papers were printed? How are we tracking on that interstate food trade?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is based on the score card, is it?

**CHAIR** - Yes, it is the same comment we had on 4, but you were able to source those figures and I thought you would have them for that area as well.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Do you want the actual 2014 figures?

**CHAIR** - As you can see from the table, 2014-15 is not available.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will endeavour to find that for you.

**CHAIR** - You do not have it with you?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We do not have it with us at the moment.

**CHAIR** - That is fine; we will take that on notice.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It was not available for printing of the budget papers.

**CHAIR** - Can you give me some idea of what extra we are doing in the interstate food trade area? We know Tasmanian products are well-sought after, both on the big island and around the world. Can you give me some idea of what we are doing there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - If you provide some breakdown because it is hard to quantify in terms of different sectors. We could extract that information for you, and take your question on notice.

**CHAIR** - I am just wondering how well rhubarb is going?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am not sure how much the \$2 million is going. I will call on Carole Rodger from Agrigrowth, who might be able to shed some sector details.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Carole.

**Ms RODGER** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - What is happening in the interstate food trade space? We are going to get some numbers at a later time but can you give the committee some indication about what is happening in that space?

**Ms RODGER** - Generally the position and growth of the interstate food trade has been maintained and in some sectors that is across the board. As you will understand, the situation depends on market demands ó for instance, berry production has increased through the likes of the investment by Costa and Co. I think confectionary is up; dairy has been up. Beyond that, I would need to take the question on notice.

**CHAIR** - Minister, I previously served on the Growing Tasmania's Economy committee. There was some talk about the extension or the upgrade to the Hobart Airport, which would potentially allow visitors to come in from overseas and provide an opportunity to send our products out. Has there been any progress with that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Out? Interstate, you mean?

**CHAIR** - Interstate and internationally. Is anything happening in that space? There was a lot around berries and the like at the time, or is that still a bit pie-in-the-sky?



**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would not say it is pie-in-the-sky at all ó the cherry and berry industries, for example, have grown enormously in recent times.

**CHAIR** - There is a slight increase. We have some actuals on overseas.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Our agricultural growth rate in terms of freight is forecast to be around 4 per cent growth. That is why we rely heavily on reliable shipping services, for example.

**CHAIR** - We know how important the *Spirit of Tasmania* is.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - *Spirits* absolutely, of course, support our freight. The Australian Government supports us through the Tasmanian Freight Equalisation Scheme and the Bass Strait Passenger Vehicle Equalisation Scheme. As you would appreciate, an integrated freight strategy is therefore a priority for the Government. Infrastructure Tas, after extensive consultation and in collaboration with communities and ministerially, has put a lot of work into that, with infrastructure stakeholders releasing that freight strategy in April this year.

Agricultural products account for 21 per cent of Tasmania's total freight by volume, and are an essential element of the state's economy. Agricultural freight is diverse and highly dispersed, with freight movements to and from farms and production centres. It creates a level of complexity, with a small state such as Tasmania. This, of course, was evident when we had the damage to the *Spirit of Tasmania II* and the subsequent disruption to freight services. When the news broke, stakeholders such as Costa's, for example, which had berries ripening on the vines, were desperate to have the freight to export it and thankfully -

**CHAIR** - Sea Road and Toll all stepped up immediately, didn't they?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - everyone stepped up immediately. Getting the *Spirit II* back up and working in short period of time was a testament to their very hard work.

**CHAIR** - My final question in this area is on the subsidy to the King Island through the King Island Assistance Package. Last year it was almost finished, but an additional \$600 000 -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is the \$30 per head?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Has that subsidy completely finished now, and are both islands on a level footing?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That has come off now, yes. It has been completed, as I understand, Chair. It was a welcome boost, if you like, for industry players after the close of the abattoir in 2012, from memory. That required some adjustment and there were concerns about the MSA cattle accreditation and the impact on that. As you would appreciate, freighting from King Island to mainland Tasmania and then onto abattoirs either at Longford or Smithton can affect MSA accreditation a lot more, as you would appreciate, from just farms to the abattoir on the island.

**CHAIR** - It just all depends on how far they are coming. If they are coming from Pyengana and they are heading to Smithton, minister, it is a fair hike.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is a fair hike. I appreciate that, Chair. It was not just a subsidy. The \$30 a head was of value, but what was also important was boosting productivity as well. A productivity officer was based on the island for some 18 months to two years or longer, working with beef producers to increase their on-farm productivity in terms of pasture management and the like.

That was Target 120, which will be completed on 30 June 2016. All recipients of grants available under Target 120 will have received their business analysis reports and will have given DPIPWE their documentation supporting expenditure of funds on strategies that enhance sustainability of their beef production businesses.

The business plan for a multi-species abattoir is being developed by Meridian Agriculture through a grant provided to the King Island Council. It is being managed in collaboration with a steering committee comprising local residents and government representatives. Part of those funds were also part of the Target 120 program; they were some of the remaining funds we were able to swing to the Rural Alive and Well program, providing some \$30 000 to King Island farmers, particularly in those challenging summer months when they suffered from drought as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you are saying that the cultivating prosperity implementation initiative has been successful and that we are on track to achieve your target of 10 billion per year by 2050. On the other hand, you are saying there have been significant challenges this year. Then there is a reduction in funding in outward years. If it has been successful, why are you reducing the funding?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I understand it, that is one of the initiatives we started when we came into Government. The decrease in that initiative reflects the cessation of what we committed to at the last election. I am not saying we will not look to see what we can continue in terms of initiatives that have worked well - for example, water for profit, the RND additional funding and the RND collaboration fund between TIAR and private industry. All those funds served a very good purpose, and no doubt will be evaluated.

The Government is not saying it will not continue to fund programs of value, but that simply reflects the fact that we are committed for a length of time to programs costing X-amount of dollars. Farm productivity funding is included in that as well and reflects when we would expect that funding to cease. There will be evaluation and reassessment to see what funds we can provide in the outgoing years.

**Mr WILLIE** - Particularly if there is challenges at the moment, as you acknowledged.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is right. We have some very smart, capable farmers and farming families in Tasmania. I rate the dairy industry very highly and in fact all industry sectors, the top 20 per cent of those respective sectors, are some of the best farmers in the world. In my view, we need to ensure the knowledge gained from innovators extends to the next 50 per cent to increase our productivity. That is the challenge we have in terms of skills development, research and development, the uptake of technology and all those important aspects of farming these days. Farming has changed enormously in the last five years, let alone 10 years.

The challenges I speak of are weather challenges and global challenges. The cut in the dairy price was a global issue, not the farmers' fault at all. We are all, but particularly the dairy industry, at the whim of the global markets. We cannot subsidise farmers to get through those circumstances. Subsidies have not worked in the past. I do not think subsidies have ever really worked that effectively. The subsidies end up coming off. We need to support our farmers in terms of increasing their productivity, which is what we are doing, but in challenging times we must ensure they can access government services around business, one-on-one support and counselling services, both emotional and financial.

There has been a great draw on those services. I rate them very highly in terms of the outreach service. Unfortunately, dare I say it, the events of the last 12 hours will require some mobilisation of support services as well. I mentioned the triple whammy for the dairy industry, and that is absolutely a triple whammy of drought, a cut in prices and flood.

**CHAIR** - Minister, for your information and that of your people, I asked the President to extend our hours this evening should we need to. Minister, last year you told us the poppy industry had a very bright future, but I believe there has been a 25 -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Sorry, are we off -

**CHAIR** - No, this is just general question - we are not into the poppy policy section. We are just into the poppy industry, which is a crop. Can you comment on that? A 25 per cent reduction in acreage across the state will be another - what would you call a four whammy?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - A quadruple whammy.

**CHAIR** - A double, double whammy?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - A triple whammy is referring to one sector. Of course, the poppy industry has gone through some challenges as well - the number of hectares for poppy production has decreased over the last five years. It peaked at just over 30 000 hectares and came around 14 000. I understand one company is halving its crop, which will account for the 25 per cent reduction, quite possibly, that you speak of - that \$14 000 figure.

I like the glass half-full when it comes to agriculture; farmers would not farm with a glass half-empty; they have to have a glass half-full. The bright side is that our poppy industry still accounts for 50 per cent of the raw narcotic material globally. While we have reduced our hectares in terms of Tasmanian production - our hectares grown - we still produce about 50 per cent of the global supply of that raw narcotic material. We are still punching above our weight in terms of what Tasmania produces and we are still around that figure in terms of our impact on the global market.

Notwithstanding our market share is about the same, the reason for the reduction in the number of hectares is a global one. It has also been affected by a change in America's drug policy.. Productivity has also increased. The productivity of farmers producing high alkaloid crops has also increased, compared to even the last five years. To get the active constituent, if you like, of a raw narcotic material, fewer hectares are now required to be grown because of industry innovation over the last decade. The Government's role is to support that productivity, but also to try to alleviate any red-tape issues.

The Poppy Advisory Control Board sits under this department, and we have found the Minister for Primary Industry is a very key stakeholder for the poppy industry. It was important to align with the department's responsibility for the industry as well. We did that because its governance was fairly fragmented across the health, justice and primary industries portfolios, in terms of stakeholder input. Not only have we streamlined operations for the PACB, but we have also introduced five-year licences. We have aligning that with the hemp reforms so that industrial hemp farmers can have five-year licences.

**CHAIR** - We might be straying into another area.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Certainly we can align five-year licences as well with poppies. We have also abolished the poppy tax, which was in the forward Estimates. It was going to raise about \$650 000. It has not been implemented yet. Members would have noticed that in the budget papers last year, the 2016-17 and 2017-18 years - I stand to be corrected - reflected revenue that would be raised by the poppy tax. In the Government's view, putting a tax on industry during some challenging times was not a good time, if ever, to implement a complicated taxation regime on an industry.

**CHAIR** - I do not think anyone knew how to implement it. That was the issue. I think we might finish off the poppies while we are going, and will come back to marine services.

**Mr DEAN** - It was mentioned that confectionary has improved. Minister, what areas of confectionary have seen an increase?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Cadbury's has increased - a glass-and-a-half.

**Mr DEAN** - So they have increased production. What are the growth areas in this area? Is anything on the horizon? Any new products? If you read the paper today, we are looking at water buffalos.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There is growth in traditional sectors. I have confidence in the dairy industry. We are some of the best converters of grass to milk in Australia and New Zealand, which in some ways alleviates the hard fall. We are more efficient producers of dairy in Tasmania than our Victorian counterparts. Dairy is a great sector. Traditional commodity crops such as peas and beans go up and down. It is good to see there is demand for the good old spud. Simplot have increased their price to farmers.

**CHAIR** - Seven dollars a tonne.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Better than a \$7 loss, mate. Better than nothing.

**Mr DEAN** - Are we exporting many of our state's spuds to the mainland?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would say just about every spud was exported out of Tasmania in the form of a chip.

**Mr DEAN** - They often go to Simplot here.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - So, you want spuds against yours.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Again, that is a global commodity. We have had issues with spud prices in the last ten years. Many farmers will tell you -

**CHAIR** - They cannot grow them for that, but they will anyway.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, and all that. Cherries are a really good news story for Tasmania. Export cherry demand is strong, particularly to China. It currently exceeds what we can supply, in actual fact. Tasmanian cherry exports to all destinations in 2015-16 were estimated to be at \$50 million, which is almost a twofold increase over the 2014-15 exports of \$27 million.

The capital infrastructure cherry growers apply to their production is extensive. Not only is there very expensive bird-netting covering hectares of cherries, but cherry farmers spend tens of millions of dollars rain-proofing as well, which highlights the value of cherries.

I guess they have done the maths and realise that the expense is worth it, given that once every five years we are hit very badly with heavy rainfall. That happened 12 months ago in January and damaged a lot of crops in the Huon Valley. Not so much in the Derwent Valley, for those who spread their risk in growing them up there.

Farmers are making huge investment decisions around capital infrastructure, as I have just mentioned, such as irrigation, for new crops. Cherries are in demand and farmers are growing them in non-traditional cherry-growing areas. We discussed that this morning in terms of opportunities for young people in the Campbell Town district, for example. Berries, the same -

**CHAIR** - Blueberries are going gangbusters.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Costa's and the collaboration of Costa's and Driscolls.

**Mr DEAN** - Hillwood Berries. That is a tremendous organisation.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Tasmania accounts for 5 per cent of Australia's blueberry production, which equates to around 296 tonnes ó that is the 2012 figures. The largest single plantation is 50 hectares at Sulphur Creek, which is owned by Costa's and Driscolls. It is also continuing its Tasmanian expansion program.

I understand that the most popular berry in the United States is the blackberry. but it only accounts for 1 per cent of market share in Australia. If Australians were to begin enjoying blackberries, there is a huge room for growth there, if we followed the American demand.

I have also noticed viticulture and nuts. We need to support those farmers as well. It occurred to me that we are particularly recognising the very strong contribution of women in agriculture, that small farms and small-farm products also play a very important role.

**CHAIR** - Like garlic.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, garlic. I went to the tomato and garlic festival in Selbourne a couple of months ago.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Could you get near it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Probably could not get near me afterwards. It was great to see. A couple of thousand people supported that festival. Small-niche producers selling their wares, value-added wares and products at that festival as well. While we need to support our commodity producers and traditional enterprises to grow, small producers also have a key role to play. That then dovetails into agri-tourism and what that can do for the local community.

I understand in certain areas of the world and mainland Australia - indeed, we see this in Tasmania - agri-tourism and farm tourism is an increasingly important opportunity. People want to experience farms, how products are grown, where food comes from. That is where Tasmania's place in the world is so important, because of that prominence value.

**Mr DEAN** - We noticed that with Chinese visitors wanting that experience - wanting to go onto farms and look at what is happening.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With regard to the poppy industry, with the freeing up, if you like, as opposed to the mainland is now getting into the poppy scene, or at least has the capacity to do so. How much of an impact is that actually having on us? I do not know whether you have already addressed that question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, I have not addressed it. It is having close to a nil impact. Of the two main companies in Tasmania - Tas Alkaloids and SunFarmer, certainly Tas Alkaloids have indicated that they are not interested in mainland expansion at this time. Naturally with the reduction in global demand, they are coming back into Tasmania where we can grow poppies best and reliably. SunFarmer have expressed a similar sentiment, and TPI Enterprises, which was formerly based at Cressy in terms of warehousing facility -

**CHAIR** - They are back here looking for more land now, aren't they?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Apparently.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What percentage of the world market are we supplying these days?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Fifty per cent. Tasmania supplies about 50 per cent of the world's raw narcotic material, and that has been relatively consistent for some time. My point is that while we have had some reduction in hectares grown, our contribution to the global market remains relatively stable, as I understand it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is no restriction on where poppies can be grown in Tasmania, is there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, provided one complies with the PHCB ruling and its rules, there are no restrictions. The only restriction would be economic, and companies will decide where they can access the product.

**CHAIR** - A person who has had a conviction of some description cannot grow poppies?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is my understanding. If you have had a drug conviction, you are unable to have a licence.

**CHAIR** - Any other related questions for the supervision of the poppy and hemp crops while we are in the poppy area? Let us finish this areas off and then go on fishing. Let us get rid of these land-based crops and get into the fishes.

**Mr DEAN** - The supervision of poppy and hemp crops has gone your portfolio from the Attorney-General's. What other changes are we likely to see in that area? You talked about the levy that is being taken from the farm, and I think a property advisory board -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That has never actually been implemented.

**Mr DEAN** - Never?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No. It was forecast to be implemented but actually not implemented.

**Mr DEAN** - The reason I would say that is that -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We actually did not think any time was a good time to tax our industry.

**Mr DEAN** - The reason I mention it is that in the 2013-14 under actuals, you have \$22 per hectare. Why does that appear there? In 2014-15 actuals, again you have \$26.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Estimated cost of it.

**Mr DEAN** - Does that not relate to that? The cost of the Poppy Advisory Control Board per hectare?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is what the Government pays.

**Mr DEAN** - The Government pays that per hectare so we have never levied. My attention has been directed to the following matter: Public Rails Tasmania in March 2016 received the attached biosecurity advice 2016-18 from the Australian Government, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, seeking input regarding the proposed conditions for the import of poppy straw and pellets from Turkey, Hungary and Portugal for processing.

I understand that initially the Tasmanian Government was going to make a submission but went cold on the idea and did not make a submission. Is that correct? And if it is, why wasn't a submission made?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I wrote directly to Barnaby Joyce. No, I think it was Fiona Nash.

**Mr DEAN** - We put in a submission? You did - to Barnaby Joyce?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I wrote directly to Barnaby Joyce expressing my concern, yes.

**Mr DEAN** - That is not common knowledge in the growing area.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am meeting with the Poppy Growers Association at its annual meeting in the next month or two. I will discuss it with them, but our concerns are well known to the federal government and the minister responsible for the importation of poppies. I understand that none of that importation was going to find its way to Tasmania. It was from Turkey or Portugal to mainland Australia, but not in to Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - It didn't occur anyway, did it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There was going to be some importation of poppy straw a couple of years ago, which we were against when we were in opposition. I understand that importation did not eventuate, so you are right ó this is a new application to Biosecurity Australia, as I understand it.

**Mr DEAN** - Is it likely that poppy straw will be imported into Tasmania?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would say highly unlikely, given that two of the companies process and value-add outside of Tasmania and one company at Westbury value-adds in Tasmania. I understand that raw poppy material will be imported into Tasmania.

**Mr DEAN** - I think that the Poppy Growers Tasmania will probably like having that information passed on to them, because the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture looked at this area for them. The minister would be aware of the institute's document on that matter, in which it identified a lot of pitfalls, areas of concern and biosecurity issues relating to that product being brought into Tasmania.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is a fair assessment from poppy growers because it was only a couple of years ago that the poppy growers were rallying round and collaborating to stop the downy mildew outbreak. I am not saying it was the result of a biosecurity risk in Tasmania, but that is an example of a potential biosecurity threat if strict biosecurity protocols are not adhered to. Thankfully with downy mildew - and that was the first time it appeared in that form in Tasmania - the TIA, which you mentioned, AgriGrowth, three other companies and Poppy Growers Tasmania collaborated strongly and we think we found a solution to it.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, how many hemp crops did we have last season in Tasmania? Does it look like that is going to expand?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I hope it expands, Mr Dean. The Government has given it every opportunity to expand, with changes in the legislation increasing the THC threshold from 0.35 per cent to 1 per cent bringing some national consistency. We have also reduced red-tape duplication in terms of licensing. We are giving the hemp farmer every opportunity to expand their industry, but that is an industrial area. When it comes to the hemp industry, the rubber will really hit the road when we can get the Commonwealth and all other jurisdictions to support hemp in food products.

Our Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson, has been working hard on that. I have also written to my counterparts, making my feelings known. In 2015-16 there were 11 licensed growers of industrial hemp in Tasmania, who were licensed to grow 105.5 hectares of



crop. The average crop yield was approximately 1 tonne per hectare with a contracted clean and dried price of \$3.50 per kilogram. There is an opportunity there, but the real value-added opportunity is less in the fibre and more in the opportunities for value-adding food.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that product cost a good return for a farmer?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - If you speak to people such as Phil Reader - he has worked diligently in the hemp industry for some time - it is a fair return, but not a groundbreaking one. It might align with cereal, for example. It is roughly right when comparing it to a cereal crop, but when you can value-add and then brand that value-adding and expect even more value from it, I would hope those figures improve returns to farmers.

**Mr DEAN** - Were there any security risks or breaches identified with the poppy growing and hemp growing?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Not to my knowledge.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you provide further information to us on the possibility of medical cannabis being taken on?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Nothing further than what is already on record. This is the responsibility of the Minister for Health. It could be another value-adding opportunity that all states appear to be keen to access. In that context, we have a very strong and robust regulatory regime with poppies and hemp in Tasmania, so we have the regulatory environment to support controlled growth.

**CHAIR** - I have a question about the GMO remediation program. It has been suggested it is very slow. Is there any reason the progress is very slow?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In terms of cleaning up the crops or compliance?

**CHAIR** - Only between four and six of the 57 sites have been remediated. Is that correct?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - It would be good to do that in the Biosecurity Tasmania output group because that is where we manage that.

## **2.2 Marine Resources**

**Mr FINCH** - On the oyster industry and the Pacific Oyster Mortality Syndrome, can you give the latest information about the outbreak in Tasmania? Will growers leave the industry because of it? What sort of a situation are they in and how do we stop that POMS from occurring again?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are a number of factors to that. It was devastating for the industry so the Government will support the growers to whatever extent is possible. I have no doubt some will leave the industry. I have no confirmation of that, but I suspect some will leave as a result of the financial impact of POMS. I still believe the oyster industry has a very strong future and we will get on top of POMS. It has appeared in the warmer waters, and if you speak to a number of growers, they might say they expected it to come at some point.

I wish it wasn't this year because I understand we are probably two or three years away from some disease-resistant stock, or at least 80 per cent disease-resistant stock, for Pacific oysters. Some farms have been devastated by it. We have offered some assistance for clean-up, in terms of fee relief for two years and low-interest loan opportunities. The federal government announced another \$1 million or more last week to support ASI in researching that disease-resistant stock variety. I have no doubt it will recover. My understanding is that other areas impacted by POMS have recovered, but it has taken some time.

**Mr FINCH** - Do we know how much of our crop was affected? How much of the industry was affected? Fifty per cent?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, having visited a farm at Pitt Water, you could see the destruction of the crop. Eighty to 90 per cent of the crop had effectively disintegrated. What happens is the shells open up and the flesh just turns into particles and disperses. Some oysters have been found to be resistant to the disease, and there is research and development activity into that. Some farmers have pretty well been completely wiped out. If only 15 per cent of your stock remains alive, processing that effectively becomes economically unviable.

**Mr FINCH** - How long do you think it will be before the industry is back on track, before we have no fear or concerns about POMS, and the industry is viable and vibrant again?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The virus remains present in infected areas. It is expected the disease and associated deaths will disappear as water temperatures cool, but it is likely to reappear if water temperatures rise over 20 degrees next summer. It is also important to realise that it just affects the Pacific oysters. It does not affect people, and oysters distributed throughout retail outlets are safe to eat. But the sooner we can get disease-resistant stock, the better off the industry will be. I hope, given our experience with POMS, that the target date for disease-resistant stock we set a couple of years ago might be exceeded. No guarantees on that. We expect the disease-resistant oyster is two to three years away. If the water temperature next summer remains cool, we might dodge POMS again. There are no guarantees about that, unfortunately.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, how many growers might be forced out of the industry because of it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, it is a \$25 million-industry. I understand there are about 104 licences or growers. I have spoken at length to Oysters Tasmania, but it is hard to tell at the moment exactly how many people will leave the industry. I suspect that players of a certain size and scale will no doubt have been affected, but will continue. A number of smaller producers might go out of the industry. There are no guarantees about that. I do not have any figures on exactly how many growers because they are still assessing the problem and there are clean-ups to be done. We remain in close contact with Oysters Tasmania and TSIC. The Oyster Recovery Package has been aligned to what the industry needs and when required, for what the industry has said is needed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - When you look at it, a lot of things have been thrown at our marine industries. Just for the record - and I am sure you are aware of all these - but there have been toxic algal blooms; the Pacific oyster mortality syndrome, which is causing significant

disruption; a sudden spread of sea urchins wiping out the kelp beds, which affects crayfish habitats; ocean acidification, which causes changes to habitat and is also affecting food sources; parasite infestations affecting salmon; and other invasive organisms and things like pathogens, viruses and predators. There is a heck of a lot being thrown at the fishing industry. Of course, there is climate change, with the water temperature going up to around 23 degrees.

That is unbelievable. You cannot help but think about the likely increase and recurrence of events such as those. Do you think we are providing enough funding for research in this area? I notice that IMAS funding is steady at \$2.6 million in the out-years. Surely the level of research required to assist in combating what I can only call scourges should exceed the funding level currently being provided. What the strategy is there to mitigate what is being thrown at our industries? It is not looking good, in all honesty, and no doubt you are aware of that, but research?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Research is vital. We agree with that, Mr Valentine. We allocated \$500 000 in the 2014-15 Budget to the University of Tasmania and Tasmania's Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies. That was for salmon research, for example. IMAS has invested this money.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That was matched by Huon Aquaculture, too, wasn't it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They played a part. I cannot tell you exactly how much they contributed, but industry plays a part. IMAS has funded a new \$6.5 million experimental aquaculture facility at the IMAS Tarooma site. That facility provides dedicated laboratory infrastructure allowing environmental control to conduct high-level salmonid research with a focus on health and nutrition. There is investment going into that area, particularly as it relates to salmon.

When it comes to the 2015 performance target, the Government's investment was \$3 million per annum in fisheries and marine farming research through the Sustainable Marine Research Collaboration Agreement with the University of Tasmania. We leveraged \$7 million on that investment to increase the funding to support our fisheries and marine farming in Tasmania. SMRCA is on track to meet that target this financial year. The value of this investment is enhanced by leveraging government investment to increase funding to support fisheries and marine farming in Tasmania.

The leverage of government investment has two components: first, additional funds provided by the University of Tasmania, and, second, additional funds from external grants, typically through a nationally competitive process. That pretty much accounts for the research.

I take your point, but it is also about how we manage the fisheries as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is a bit of everything really, isn't it?

**Mr GOTT** - It is research and development; it is sustainable management of our fisheries -and abalone springs to mind; rock lobster on the east coast springs to mind, as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I assume we are having discussion with the industry on a regular basis to help it understand the sorts of threats it is facing?

**Mr GOTT** - The industry itself most certainly understand the threats. A really good collaborative project is underway with the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association at the moment. We are committed to providing \$100 000 per annum over three years, beginning in the 2015-16 year in fact, towards an east coast rock lobster translocation program. We will also provide an additional \$15 000 for a recreational fishery trial. A co-management committee has been formed to oversee the process, with representatives from the department, the TRLFA, which is the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fishermen's Association, the Tasmanian Association for Recreational Fishing -TARfish - and, of course, IMAS.

Last September, I approved an operational plan developed by the committee, including the protocols for moving around 50 000 lobsters for year 1. This included a recommendation from the committee that the additional \$15 000 should be used towards the general transportation process and translocation operations to relocate lobsters from the south-west to the east coast.

That got up in April this year, and 43 000 rock lobsters were successfully translocated. It is planned to undertake further translocation for the remaining 7 000 in October this year. That is about rebuilding the rock lobster stocks on the east coast. As Mr Valentine would be well aware, those stocks fell to around 8 per cent of biomass, which has caused all sorts of challenges in terms of growing and maintaining a sustainable fishery.

We implemented a challenging regime for both the recreational and the commercial fishing sectors during the last six months or so to assist us with that, but it is one of those things - we have to make difficult decisions. The recreational and commercial fishing sectors need to come together for the benefit of the industry because we want rock lobsters or crayfish - whatever you like to call them - in the decades to come.

I want a sustainable fishery; it is a huge export opportunity for Tasmania. It is also part of our recreational culture as well. A 10-year stock rebuilding and biomass rebuilding strategy - for 2013-23 - is in place.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think translocation is a great idea, but the problem is the sea urchins are eating them. Is anything being done to promote the harvest of sea urchins to reduce their impact on the kelp beds crayfish need to be able to survive properly?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, there is.

**CHAIR** - A sea urchin factory up on the east coast shut down -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is that right? At St Helens?

**CHAIR** - Yes, it shut down; very disappointing.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will bring Rob Gott to the table. We have a number of commercial harvest strategies in place. Abalone divers have also played a role when it comes to the challenges of the sea urchin incursion.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What we might be doing to try to mitigate some of these issues?

**Mr GOTT** - The sea urchin incursion on the east coast is part of a natural process linked to the increasing strength of the Australian current. It has been reported since the last 1970s. Because it is a natural process, it is very difficult for us to intercede. Lester mentioned the east coast rock lobster stock rebuilding strategy. Part of that strategy is based around building the biomass of rock lobster on the east coast. We have informed that strategy with the best science from IMAS, which says that if we can rebuild stocks there, that will have an impact on *centrostephanus*. That is the strategy and the implementation of the 200 tonne catch level in that stock rebuilding area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you saying the crayfish eat sea urchin?

**Mr GOTT** - They do. They are a predator of sea urchin. We have rock lobster that predate sea urchin and a few groper species that also predate sea urchin. If we can rebuild the stocks of rock lobster, and the Government has supported the east coast rock lobster stock rebuilding strategy, that will be a really good step. IMAS has told us if we model the 200 tonne catch limit with the rebuilding of stocks, that will have a beneficial effect in negating the changeover. We have the *centrostephanus* invading healthy rocky reef that can arrest that tipping point to where we get the full-blown barons which is a difficult issue.

**CHAIR** - It seems to me like they are doing a fair bit in that.

**Mr GOTT** - I have only touched on one thing. There are a couple of other things.

**CHAIR** - I know you are passionate about this.

**Mr GOTT** - We also have done quite a bit of research and we know there is not a lot we can do in terms of culling the urchins. My analogy that you can weed the garden, so you can have a small area - and I am talking about a matter of hectares - where you can go and religiously remove the urchins and that will manage them there. We are talking about huge areas of water. What we have tried on the east coast, which is packed with urchins, is to encourage the development of a commercial fishery there, and that has been problematic. In addition, we had the Abalone Council, who put their hands in their own pockets to put up \$50 000 this year to help subsidise the harvesting of *centrostephanus*, and they were linking in with processes to do that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There are processors out there, people processing sea urchins?

**Mr GOTT** - We have a small operator in Launceston doing some processing of them. We had an enterprise at St Helens.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is shut now.

**Mr GOTT** - Yes, that is now shut.

**CHAIR** - We have visited Goshen.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We have, I was there.

**Mr GOTT** - In addition to that, we have a number of processors looking at the commercial viability of processing urchin roe. That is problematic because it requires specialised treatment. The other issue is developing the markets.

Another recent development is a company endeavouring to trial the enhancement of *centrostephanus* as well as harvesting on marine farming leases. The idea is that you harvest urchins in poor condition for their roe, put them on refarming leases and feed them proprietary food at volume, which makes them attractive to the market.

There is no golden bullet. We are trying to advance a whole range of bits and pieces. We have some funding for SMRCA to go back and do a follow-up survey of the east coast to get a better understanding of the dynamics of change. We also have some FRDC funding to assess the nutraceutical composition of sea urchins.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you explain that term?

**Mr GOTT** - If you eat it, it does marvellous things for you. This project will also look at the potential of using *centrostephanus* for other things.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that indepth question and fulsome answer.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Minister, I note your government today has announced some changes to the salmon industry, \$1.5 million for research projects. I see there is going to be a levy on the salmon farm licences. How will that cost be determined across farm licences?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We announced three important changes to the regulation of the salmon industry today, Mrs Armitage. I have been conscious for some time that this is such an important industry for Tasmania, particularly in terms of jobs and economic value, that we must work with the industry to ensure that community confidence in it is maintained.

The three changes we announced today firstly affect environmental regulation of salmon. That effectively means that the environmental regulatory regime right throughout the supply chain for salmon, from hatcheries to the farms, and of course the processing facilities, will be effectively monitored by the EPA, Environmental Protection Authority. That is consistent with, for example, how the mining industry is regulated as well. The Department of Primary Industries will maintain the work alongside the industry to support its growth.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Under a single authority?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The EPA will be responsible for the environmental regulation of farms consistently right across the supply chain. That is an important change in maintaining community confidence in the regulation, particularly environmental regulation, of the industry.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The levy - how it is going to be implemented?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The levy will be implemented. Currently the salmon industry, the Government, collects about \$1.1 million from levies through licensing mainly for the salmon industry. To support its growth, we need to ensure we have the resources -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is this an additional \$1.5 million, though?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So how is that going to be levied? How are you going to determine it across the salmon licences?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are expecting to raise about \$1.5 million over four years. Effectively that is less than \$400 000 a year we will be raising from the levy - of course additional - to ensure we have the resources within the department to support the industry's growth.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I accept that, minister, but how are you going to determine it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am coming to that. It is just a cost-recovery exercise effectively. We will be working with industry to see how that is best applied in terms of the levy. We can apply the levy through the Living Marine Resources Act 1995. We will be doing so and we will be working with industry to ensure that it remains a cost-recovery exercise.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - If I go back to my question, what is the likely cost on a salmon farm licence? It says the levy will be put on salmon farm licences to help fund the assessment of industry proposals, tactical research and scientific study. The \$1.5 million over the four years - how are you going to determine - I accept you are going to be discussing it, but you must have some idea when you are wanting to get \$1.5 million from the salmon farmers - the local cost is for each farm? How are you going to determine how much each farm will pay? If you want \$1.5 million, you must know how many farmers there are and what you are likely to get.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are three main companies when it comes to the salmon industry.

**CHAIR** - That is \$500 000 each.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will be working with the industry to assess the best way to apply that.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - As the minister said, we are looking to generate a stream of income over the next four years to support the industry and its great aspirations. As they move into new waters, this will require considerable work to be done by both companies. They do a lot of work around their baseline and impact assessments. Quite a bit of work also needs to be done by government in accepting those and supporting that development.

We will be sitting down with the companies to work through way to generate that sort of income. We would also like to work with them on developing key performance indicators. We will look at things like HG modelling, so we have the hypogenetic models of where we want to grow. It will look at providing us with the capacity to interpret the information they provide us with. It is all about assisting companies to grow and develop.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are 44 licences, 17 green-farm licences -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - It would depend on the size of the licence as to how much they pay?

**CHAIR** - Is it the area?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - As I said, part of the process - and what the Government has announced today - is they will consult with industry around how the levy could work. Those sort of technical details - for example, exactly how much per lease for the licence. We will work with the companies but at the end of the day it is to provide a stream or revenue that assists the Government in supporting industry growth.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Minister, was there any consultation with industry before this was announced? Did industry know this was coming or will it to be a shock to them when they read about it in tomorrow's paper?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - No, industry is aware of three aspects of the changes - absolutely aware prior to today's announcement. The changes also include, of course, strengthening the penalty regime as well -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - My next question.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Which will reflect and be commensurate to - the penalty will be commensurate to the value gained from the penalty itself.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The maximum currently prior to this - I see now it is \$30 800 - will be the new maximum penalty. What was it prior to today's changes?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The \$30 800 is the current maximum penalty, and the new penalty will reflect the size of the breach. It will be commensurate to the value of the breach.

**CHAIR** - Will that be through regulation, minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Will there be an impact statement to go with that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Possibly. I would say so.

**CHAIR** - I hope so.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would expect so.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Are you able to provide - out of interest; it would be good to compare with this next year when we do budgets again - how much money was actually brought in through fines for the last financial year?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Across just salmon industry?



**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Across the industry we are talking about at the moment with the penalty changing here. It would be easier to look at one particular institute rather than try to muddy the waters by doing a lot. So just salmon would be interesting, yes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Just salmon?

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I think that would be easier to determine, rather than confusing it with other areas.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is more complex than that.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We can certainly provide that next year, about how many fines have been received by salmon. As far as I am aware, no fines were received this year. Having said that, following Huon Aquaculture providing about \$256 000 over two years in response to their accedence of their food cap in the Huon last year, that is reflected in the budget papers over two years.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Finch, you started this line item and you will be able to finish it before we have a cup of tea.

**Mr FINCH** - I will cut to the *Geelong Star* if I might, minister. Do you think the *Geelong Star* should continue to fish around Tasmania into the future? How long do you think it is sustainable for the *Geelong Star* to be there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - All trawling is banned in Tasmania. So there is no trawling in Tasmanian waters.

**Mr FINCH** - How close would the *Geelong Star* get?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In terms of nautical miles?

**Mr GOTT** - No trawling is occurring in state waters. State waters are essentially three nautical miles, high-water mark and established baselines around the coast of Tasmania.

**Mr FINCH** - Can I be assured that will not threaten our marine ecology, around the coastline. Are we safe in that respect?

**Mr GOTT** -My information is that yes, we are.

**Mr FINCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Just for everyone's information, 348 millimetres of rain in the last 24 hours. It is really quite dire.

**Mr DEAN** - They just forcibly evacuated Hart Street, which is right around me, at the side of me. I might go home later on.

**CHAIR** - On the strength of that members, we will try to use some of water up by boiling it for tea. We will suspend until 4.12 p.m.

**The committee suspended from 4.01 p.m. to 4.18 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I have an answer to Mr Dean's question around compliance in - I thought it was hemp you asked for in isolation, but I have some poppy information just for completeness.

In terms of security of poppy crops, 9 698 inspections of poppy crops were undertaken this year compared to 7 913 the previous year. The increased number of inspections is primarily attributable to a full complement of field officers for the period. Ten poppy interference reports were submitted, compared with seven the previous year. Five hundred and sixteen capsules were stolen compared to 331 the previous year. Eleven industrial hemp crops were grown on 105.5 hectares, and 40 inspections of hemp crops were conducted.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Before we move to water resource management, Mr Finch has a very important question. It is related to recreational fishers. We have not spoken too much about them and I thought it would appropriate to provide an opportunity for Mr Finch.

**Mr FINCH** - As we get closer to the federal election, we hear the federal government is looking to bring recreational fishers into the management system. Do you support that, minister? What is the Tasmanian Government doing to promote the interests of recreational fishers?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I understand that at present we have allocated funding \$50 000 to study the value of recreational fishing.

That gives all of us an idea of the very high value of recreational fishing to the Tasmanian economy and the like. That is ongoing work. Your question around recreational fishers having a greater say in terms of Commonwealth-managed fisheries - I saw an announcement a few days ago from my Braddon colleague, Brett Whiteley MP, on that, and without a full understanding of the detail of that, I support that initiative.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine has a question on east coast fisheries, which are very important.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The salmon industry and the lease around Triabunna: can you update us on its status? Obviously there are those who would say it is a high-risk thing to allow further salmon farming if we do not know how warmer waters will affect yield in the future. Can we hear your thinking on that at this point?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We support the measured expansion of salmon farming. Our announcements today align with supporting the growth of the industry, but also ensuring its regulation is in line with community expectations.

The marine farm operations around Tasmania occur under the provisions of the Marine Farm Planning Act 1995. That Act specifically provides processors with the ability to

determine where and how marine farming operations may occur. The intent of the Act is to support sustainable development of the marine farm industry and provide certainty to the community and the industry alike on where and what farming operations may occur in state waters.

The capability to grow salmon at Okehampton Bay was provided for in the Great Oyster Bay and Mercury Passage marine farming development plan, which was approved in 1998 after a comprehensive planning and consultation process. It was reviewed in 2007. With respect to Okehampton Bay, members may have heard a Tassal representative on the radio just last week talking about expansion plans, ruling out any farming in Mercury Passage, for example.

There has been a degree of misinformation on that matter, including an article I saw in the *Mercury* as well from Tassal in the same week. We support measured sustainable growth in the salmon industry. Companies do not put fish in the water unless they do environmental testing and research to ensure fish can grow in that environment. It is not in any way, shape or form, someone saying, 'We might put fish here and do it.' A lot of work goes on before that. I expect that Tassal will utilise the farm and have fish in the water towards the end of 2018. Quite a degree of work has to be carried out before that farming can go ahead.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Given the sort of issues we have been experiencing on the east coast, especially the high temperature waters, will a different monitoring regime be put in place to ensure this is not, shall we say, detrimental not only to farmers, but also the environment?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Ongoing monitoring will be carried out to protect the environment and the health of the fish, to ensure this is a sustainable operation. Doctor Whittington might provide further advice.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Environmental controls based on the licence will be required for operating on that lease. Those environmental obligations will be contemporary around monitoring of both the benthic, the seafloor, as well as the water column. As the minister said earlier, following the announcement today, the EPA director will become the environmental regulator. All environmental regulation on Oaklandon will be the responsibility of the EPA going forward, once the reforms are in place.

We will go through a process of transitioning from our current system with the EPA. The EPA director will both impose and monitor the environmental obligations. We can be assured there will be an environmental monitoring program both in the water and of the benthos.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Has there been any consideration given to enable a better environmental performance? Say, for instance, in production of the suspended shoots underneath these pens so that you can collect the undigested food getting through to the floor.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I know this technology aligns with that in terms of the section. I am not sure how far away that is. I know work has been done on that.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We will have controls in place about the seabed. If material on the seabed accumulates to an unacceptable level, we will require pens to be moved. An

appropriate management regime takes account of the impact on the benthos. The siting of the pens in the first place is in areas that are essentially of low susceptibility, which is a good way of putting it. Then we have fallowing and monitoring regimes with video surveillance and the like to make sure we have the system working correctly.

**CHAIR** - Minister, it has been suggested the current practices of salmon farming are not world's best practice. Is there any indication from the company and the Legislative Council are having a briefing in a couple of weeks. I have not had the opportunity to have the Tassal briefing. Are you aware of any move to meet these world's best practice conditions?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - My view is it is world's best practice. We have Tassal and WWF supporting Tassal in their farming sustainability. That indicates a very strong endorsement for those practices from an organisation such as WWF.

**CHAIR** - So you are comfortable the companies are meeting it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I am very comfortable with that. Any industry, whether agriculture, horticulture or aquaculture, should always be based on continuous improvement. I know it is a very clear philosophy of all three companies. Technology evolves innovation all around the areas of sustainability to ensure the industry grows and flows into the future. It is in the company's interest for continuous improvement. It has been backed up by WWF.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We will take the opportunity to hear from the company and the department at a later time, when we have representation by the stakeholder group and their communities. Minister, the wild fishers management program has \$400 000 in new funding. Can you give me a brief overview of what is planned for that \$400 000? It is additional funding on top of what has already been allocated in this line item.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - This is the developmental fishery objective of the government. Prior to the 2014 election, we said we would explore the possibilities of developmental fisheries, and we are doing that to see what other opportunities there might be on a sustainable basis. That work is progressing.

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

**CHAIR** - We all have an interest in this, given your government has supported the reduction of red- and green-tape to enable water development to progress fairly rapidly in the state. We have a reduction in Australian Government funding for the compliance project under this line item. How is that program progressing?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We got project funding from the Commonwealth to do a particular compliance project, and a lot of work has been done in that but it is now winding out. That work has set us up for going forward. It has improved the systems we use in the field and also our databases in the background we operate from. That is a piece of work that was done and we are still rolling that out.

**CHAIR** - Given we have had a significant increase in water development right around the state - and we have been to a number of openings where water initiatives have been implemented - does there need to be additional compliance and people on the ground? I am talking about the Ringarooma Dam and Headquarters Road, all those water initiatives that

need people to oversee what is happening. I know Tasmanian Irrigation has some role and I am just interested in the department's role.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The Water Management Branch works collaboratively with TI and TI is responsible for certain schemes. Our Water Management Branch officers did a fantastic job this year working with farmers, particularly when there was sparing water for irrigators. They worked alongside farmers and in some cases encouraged farmers to get together to allocate water according to need and ensure everyone got through the challenging dry period - the irrigation season, particularly for those farmers drawing on river catchments more directly. It is a difficult job rocking up to farmers saying, 'You've got to turn off your pumps.' I cannot think of a more heightened period of stress than the full-on irrigation season, dwindling water resources and the economics of not applying water, but they did a very good job, and I take my hat off to them. We had a barbecue for them at Mount Pleasant just recently, to recognise all the good work done by the state's water management officers. Most, if not all, catchments and surety 5 and 6 water restrictions faced a very challenging time, but those officers worked well. They covered the respective areas and farmers did a very good job in respecting their role as well. In average seasons, these things are not much of an issue at all. With what is clearly a diminishing resource, applying irrigation had become very challenging.

**CHAIR** - Can I take you to the performance information table 9.6 in the budget papers? The level of farm-water development - I have already congratulated your Government on the initiative of streamlining water development, we are down on the number of dam work permits approved. Are there more people using irrigation and not putting in their own storage? Do you have some idea why we are down? I know that five might not seem a lot, but there could be a significant number of waterholes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In the 2015-16 year, a performance target of 40 dams approved with additional storage volume of 14 000 megalitres was set. As at 26 May 2016, 32 dams were approved, with a combined storage capacity of 11 371 megalitres. These figures reflect the growing trend for farmers to build larger storages to enhance their water security. With the number and quantum amount of storage volume being considered, currently the targeted storage volume will be reached in 2015-16. Secure water supplies are essential to underpin productivity.

**CHAIR** - So they may be building less, but they are building bigger dams?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is the information I have. All dam applications continue to be assessed well within the 12-week approval period.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Are they spread across the state, minister, or are they in a particular area or a region?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are always traditional areas that are good for building dams, depending on soil type and those sorts of things and the amount of clay you can access to secure the dam.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - There is an art to building a dam, isn't there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There is an art to building a dam. You have that right, both in terms of storage capacity and ensuring that it is safe. Pieman - one dam approved; Inglis-Cam - one; Mersey-Forth - four dams; Meander - 3; Pipers-Ringarooma - 4; South Esk - 10; the Derwent-South East - 8; and the Huon-Gordon - 1. That is a total of 32, as I mentioned before. These applications were approved by the Water Management Region.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - All within the timeframe?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, the capacity in terms of the size of the dams, between July 2014 and 26 May this year was: less than 10 megalitres - 6, and between 10 and 100 megalitres - 15. The number of approvals: between 100 and 1 000 megalitres - 1 000 megalitres is getting up there in terms of dams, particularly on farms - 10 approvals; and greater than 1 000 megalitres - 1 approval.

**CHAIR** - Are there any other questions on water resource management?

## **Output group 6 - Biosecurity Tasmania**

### **6.1 Biosecurity**

**CHAIR** - We will go onto Biosecurity.

**Mr WILLIE** - I might leave some of the overarching questions to my colleagues.

**CHAIR** - In another place.

**Mr WILLIE** - No, I have some here, if we need them. Minister, you previously told the Tasmanian Parliament that your decision to scrap the Fox Eradication Taskforce would - and did - result, and I highlight the word, in an annual budget saving of \$1.5 million. Minister, were those statements correct? If they are, can you tell me where in the Budget that saving is shown?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. They were correct and I informed the parliament just a few days ago about that. We committed to save \$1.5 million by abolishing the Fox Eradication Taskforce -

**Mr WILLIE** - Annually?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, annually. This will be ongoing - I detailed that saving to parliament just last week or the week before. We did that because we wanted to ensure that schools and other areas of need across government were prioritised. That policy was formulated when the previous government earmarked it as a budget-saving measure of closing 20 schools. I recall announcing at the Edith Creek School, that to save those schools and prop-up the budget, we would reallocate resources from the fox eradication project to support those schools so they remained open. The response in the room was euphoric in terms of where the Government should be prioritising those resources.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have a supplementary question. Minister, your office wrote to the department in 2014 seeking clarification on the issue, and you signed a detailed departmental

showing savings associated with scrapping the taskforce of approximately \$900 000 per annum. How do you explain that discrepancy?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I understand it, you are looking at a briefing note signed in early July. The budget was in August as we know. That was just a point in time in terms of the saving. As a result of abolishing the fox eradication program, we have saved \$1.5 million, which will be redirected to areas of more need across government.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, I noticed there is an increase in biosecurity services. Where have the biosecurity risks been identified as being the highest?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There are a lot of pressure points on our biosecurity or protecting our borders, if I can put it that way. It depends, I guess - we have had an incursion of myrtle rust, blueberry rust in the last couple of years. The Department of Biosecurity Tasmania has done a very good job in bringing together its personnel to eradicate those two incursions.

The increasing number of tourists coming to Tasmania - which is good news story, of course also elevates the risk. It is important to ensure that our borders are covered, our ports of entry, particularly our main ports of entry. Our mail centres, TT-Line port and the Launceston and Hobart airports are covered by detector dog teams, which are a very effective deterrent and tool in terms of picking up any unwanted items.

It is good that this increase in biosecurity can go into those detector dog teams at our borders. We have effectively doubled the detector dog teams during the last two years, from six to 12. Their appearance also has a strong impact on the travelling public.

Importantly, we have changed the pre-border inspection for TT-Line as well. We are inspecting cars and seizing quarantine risk material at the pre-border, the Port of Melbourne. Our resources have been applied there and that prevents any unwanted quarantine material coming to Tasmania, which is a good thing. Rather than collecting it at Devonport, where it could get through the system, we can do it at the pre-border.

It is important in a biosecurity regime to have pre-border, border and post-border quarantine measures, because we know the risks are ever-increasing. The last couple of years we have increased biosecurity resources and infrastructure. This particular budget is a \$1 million allocation to biosecurity infrastructure, signage, and truck wash facilities.

Last year, we invested in signage as well - a \$2 million-commitment to upgrade communications and signage at the border. That program is half-way through. There is \$2 million, \$500 000 per year, to increase the detector dogs from six to nine, and a further \$2 million to increase them from nine to 12.

**Mr WILLIE**- I would like to go back to that question note in my presentation. The briefing note very clearly says this includes approximately \$756 000 per annum for landscape monitoring activities and approximately \$191 000 per annum to support activities. I know you say it is a particular point in time, but it is very clear that it is a per annum saving.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, but you have also to remember we have ended the fragmentation of biosecurity and there were output groups containing aspects of the fox eradication program as well. In ending all that fragmentation, the fox eradication program and associated activities, we have saved that funding.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - In the 2014-15 Budget of August 2014-15, there was \$1.5 million reduced in the budget papers. It is clear that we had to save for the fox program, and we did. That briefing note was a point in time. We knew from the moment of the election, it was an election commitment, to say \$1.5 million. We were on a path to do that because it would start from the day the budget was brought down back to 1 July.

We had started saving costs in that area so we could meet our budget savings of \$1.5 million, which is clearly identified in the 2014-15 Budget.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The previous budget, the 2014-15 Budget, totalled \$9.15 as I recall. Footnote 6 clearly said and produced funding as a result of the abolition of the fox eradication program.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The detector dogs - can you tell me where they are located please? Which airports?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, I can. I will ask Lloyd Klumpp, General Manager of Biosecurity Tasmania, to provide more detail on that.

**Mr KLUMPP** - We have detector dog teams in Hobart and in Devonport. The Devonport teams cover Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - They don't live in the office though?

**Mr KLUMPP** - No, they have got very good kennels.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Where they were based. I was reading about the dogs. It was interesting reading where they came from. When you actually see that most of them were dogs that had had previous lives and had not always been the best-behaved dogs.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - A new lease of life, literally. They make a great contribution to this state.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Minister, you mentioned at a press release on biosecurity on 7 May the detection of 285 prohibited items. Can you give us an insight of to what type of items they were?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They are with respect to TT-Line.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Biosecurity frontline screen - it doesn't say whether it was TT-Line or not. It just says, 'In fact last year a biosecurity frontline screen for \$64 842, interstate and overseas postal items.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Postal items. That is right.

**Mr KLUMPP** - It is a whole range of materials. Most of them are plant-based materials so it would be things like oranges, potpourri, a whole lot of -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Do drugs come into that category as well?



**Mr KLUMPP** - Yes. We work with the police and if we find anything like that, we refer it to the police. We had one just recently.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - So out of the 285, the majority wouldn't be illicit as in drugs. They would be food items.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - The only other question I have to ask you is about the turtle. Any idea how the turtle on the plane came to be here?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not know. I do know it was well -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Has it come to light yet how it came here?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - As I understand, by coincidence it was World Turtle Day on the day as it was found, but I do not know about that at all. The point is that it was found, which is the most important thing, given the disease was - Lloyd, have you heard anything further on that?

**Mr KLUMPP** - No. Given where it was, we can only surmise that somebody else tried to bring it in.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - And someone left it up there.

**Mr DEAN** - It wasn't found by you though, was it? It was found by the airline staff.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The airline staff, yes.

**Mr KLUMPP** - And they came straight to our people.

**CHAIR** - I think the minister is excused for not knowing where the turtle came from. Minister, you touched on truckwashes - very important for biosecurity. Can you tell me, Powranna, which needs a truckwash, is the Government working with the company to install that?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, we are working with local government, industry and Biosecurity Tasmania collaboratively to plan, design and restore the truckwash facility there. That is a fair way down the process at this present time and hopefully it is not far away.

**CHAIR** - What are we talking, 'not far away'? I am a yesterday girl so tomorrow's good for me, but it is probably not for you.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - This financial year.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, the coming financial year, so at the end of June 2017 we hope to have it installed.

**CHAIR** - There are still a lot of biosecurity issues between now and then.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Hopefully it will be a lot quicker than that.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We expected it before that - we hoped - but at least we are building one which is much needed.

**Mr DEAN** - You will note I did not ask any questions on the foxes this year. It is with the police so I did not think it was proper. Minister, what are the main real risks of breaches of biosecurity in Tasmania at the present time? What are the big issues we are working hard on?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are working on eradication of myrtle rust.

**Mr DEAN** - That is ongoing?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, blueberry rust has been an issue, as I mentioned before. We have had some incursions of weeds in recent years - Bathurst burr is one example. While POMS have been an example of biosecurity issue effectively - Lloyd, do you have anything further?

**Mr KLUMPP** - In terms of risks, the biggest one for us is the Queensland fruit fly because of the state of the mainland's fruit fly status and their freedom, so we recognise that is one of our biggest risks.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that the one that can be brought in airborne or does it have to be brought in on fruit?

**Mr KLUMPP** - It is most likely in fruit, and it is one of the reasons we have our detector dogs. We take the approach of managing risks as a blanket. Clearly, we identify high-risk elements and make sure we have them covered, like fruit fly. We have a system, which is about managing risk, generically. That is so important, because we do not know what the next thing is.

Clearly, we need to ensure we identify those really high risks, like Queensland fruit fly and make sure our system deals with those. There are a whole range of others - there's hundreds of them.

**Mr DEAN** - What about the lorikeet and other issues? Are we free of that, do you know, or is that still an issue? I think there were two bird species.

**Mr KLUMPP** - There are still some very small populations we are controlling. Again, like many of these things, they are a constant threat and a constant risk. I might have seen that we still have a very small number of rainbow lorikeets that we are pursuing.

**Mr DEAN** - Okay, still working on it.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions members? If not, we will move on to product integrity. Can I invite Mr Valentine to lead-off in questioning there?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Most of it was covered under marine resources. I note the one-off funding for the POMS virus impact. Has the oyster industry indicated any expectations of a

return to viability, following this initial POMS infestation? Is there any timeframe in terms of fees or revenue to recover.? You might have covered it earlier, but I just-

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - There is fee relief for two years.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is two years.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Currently in debate, and we will continue to work with the oyster industry and assess what is required, moving forward to support them. We expect disease-resistant stock within the not-too-distant future - I would say it is possibly a couple of years away.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Which means we could experience another one of these outbreaks?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, yes, if the water temperatures are above 20 degrees, like they were this year, we could have a recurrence of POMS.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am looking at that budget line item. It falls off - 757 000 down in 2017-18. If it happens again, how are we going to -

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We are clearly committed to supporting the Pacific oyster industry. That has been demonstrated with our level of commitment so far. We have a \$7.6 million-package out there: \$5 million for a POMS recovery loans scheme; \$1 million for the clean-up costs of affected farms; and the 24 months fee relief I outlined before.

Importantly, Eric Hutchinson announced a few days ago that further research into disease-resistant stock will be undertaken to effectively ensure we have clean stock to re-seed our oyster beds.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Where would that stock come from? We provide 80 per cent of stock to the rest of Australia and probably other places.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I think it is a bit higher than that.

**Mr KLUMPP** - There is a group called ASI doing the research, and they maintain breed stock.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Whereabouts?

**Mr KLUMPP** - They are based in South Australia.

**CHAIR** - We heard that in the briefing at an earlier time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I do not recall, but I do remember a little bit of a briefing.

**Mr KLUMPP** - I might be able to answer a bit more of your query about viability of industry. We have a joint government industry POMS recovery committee that is developing the recovery plan. It is also looking at different ways for the industry to manage themselves to live with the disease, even in the interim, until we have that disease-resistant stock. We actually have the state zoned into three areas, with movement restrictions and requirements

from those zones to slow down the spread of the virus even next summer. Very importantly, the industry itself is working on a range of initiatives to build viable businesses again, including things like window-farming and better biosecurity for hatcheries, nurseries and those sorts of things.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Does this virus affect only oysters or does it affect mussels?

**Mr KLUMPP** - No, just oysters.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just oysters.

**Mr KLUMPP** - Pacific oysters.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are there any issues with mussel-farming in terms of product integrity?

**Mr KLUMPP** - Probably the major issue for mussel industry is harmful algal blooms.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is that an issue that has to be addressed going forward? I do not know if mussel farmers need to import different stock to better handle the bloom?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is difficult to control the marine biotoxins. It is really about monitoring and preparing, detecting and ensuring that the community is aware when it is present, so you can alert the consumer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just stopping people harvesting them.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, and Spring Bay Seafoods at their best time of the year, which is around Easter. It was devastating for them. I remember actually being there a year or so ago at Easter and people had been up all night, like 2 o'clock in the morning, starting processing mussels for the Easter market. For that to happen at peak time is devastating. Better to know that algal bloom exists and have it detected so companies and consumers, if some products are at risk, can be alerted.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thankfully we have the testing regimes in place that actually detect these things.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, and that is getting better in terms of testing regimes as well. It is a very important investment for the industry, and indeed Tasmania's brand, to ensure we have a program.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - It is really important we differentiate between the two. POMS is a virus that affects the oyster, which has no impact on us. With the harmful algal blooms, they do not affect the mussel, but if we ingest the mussel, we have a problem. Quite different, but absolutely the program to monitor the currents that contain the toxic algae in the environment.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I understand that. How do we mitigate against the algal blooms? It is a very difficult thing to mitigate against. It is something that occurs naturally, is it not?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Yes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not know how we stop that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is not a run-off issue or nutrients going into the bay that we can detect in terms of research. Are people researching algal bloom?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes.

**Mr KLUMPP** - There is a lot of work going on trying to understand the risk factors for harmful algal blooms. We just do not know at the moment.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - If I may, minister. The Tas SQAP program looks at a range of things that might cause issues for the consumer of the shellfish product. It is not just harmful algal blooms out in the ocean. It is also looking at impacts from run-off and storm events. A storm event will close a shellfish facility in the area where you get increased run-off. The program itself looks at a range of risks and manages that risk so that we can have good healthy food.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Does that look at, for instance, the type of farming that goes on upstream or bordering the rivers feeding into those bays and those sorts of things just to check whether it is actually linked to nutrients used on farms. Do you know what I am trying to say here?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We measure run-off into bays and that then is a trigger-point for the program. Plus we are measuring toxins out in the water and in the shellfish themselves. It is a multi-pronged approach. We are looking to do a lot R&D in the Tas SQAP space. If you would like, if it is all right with you, minister, Lloyd can explain some of that.

**Mr KLUMPP** - Tas SQAP itself, as John said, monitors a range of environmental factors, including the presence of those harmful algae. Things like salinity, sediment and particular pathogens like *vibrio*, for example.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Nutrients?

**Mr KLUMPP** - Nutrient levels are monitored routinely and that part is collected. The purpose of the program is twofold: the public health issue - making sure the product does not get into the marketplace and harm people; and market access - demonstrating to our markets that Tasmania has a safe product. All that data is collected; its primary purpose is for those two things. We also feed the data into other organisations, such as SARDI - the South Australian Research Development Institute - and IMAS for research across a whole range of things.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I have a question regarding 1080. I notice that on 20 May, a media release stated that the dry season led to more Tasmanian farmers using the controversial poison, 1080, to control foraging wildlife two years after plans for it were scrapped. *Tasmanian Country* said 1.45 kilograms of 1080 had been approved for use on 40 properties to the end of April in the 2015-16 financial year, and that previously 1.15 kilograms were used on 29 properties. I know we have wet conditions at the moment, but

with the dry conditions we have had in the past, is the department anticipating a substantial increase in 1080 use, noting that in 1999-2000, 15.2 kilograms of 1080 were used?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That was largely related to plantation-based forestry, which, I understand, caused that considerable spike. New Zealand has used some 2 500 kilograms before, so our 1.45 kilograms - and the slight increase in recent years - reflects pressures on wildlife with less feed in the bush so they are accessing farmed agricultural properties and eating dry matter.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - Is it still seen as a poison of last resort?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes. A lot of work has been done on trying to find alternatives to 1080. The federal government invested some \$4 million into its *Alternative to 1080* report, which was released, I think, in the mid-2000s. It found there was no viable alternative to 1080. Not every farmer uses 1080, which is clear because of the 40 times it was accessed; some farmers wallaby-fence because they have properties where wallaby-fencing works for them. Others employ shooters or undertake the shooting and culling themselves to try to have some sort of sustainable yield of wallaby populations. It is a last resort. I went to Tewksbury on the north-west coast a couple of years ago. That is where you have some plantations that have effectively failed plantations; it is a breeding area for wallabies. You can see their tracks on farm land, where they have been eating the farm pasture. It has devastating economic consequences.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I have been to different properties down the east coast, and you see hundreds of wallabies of an evening.

**CHAIR** - Wallaby-fencing is so expensive.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is expensive. It is effective to a point but once -

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - We need wallaby fencing on the side of the road, don't we, member for Apsley?

**CHAIR** - We do.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In the absence of an effective viable alternative, we recognise farmers should have access to 1080 as one of the tools to manage their browsing animals. It was earmarked for banning -

**CHAIR** - Ten years ago.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Well, yes, to be implemented in 2015. We could not impose that ban because of the economic consequences, but farmers are responsible in how they manage.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - I am not sure where my next question fits; it is probably here. It is about product integrity and is related to a report suggesting that 59 cattle died while being transported from Stanley to Victoria. I believe the report was finalised in April. Do you have the findings into how the cattle died and what changes will occur to prevent such deaths happening again?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I do not have a final report. I know there was a joint investigation between Victorian and Tasmanian government authorities and the RSPCA. I can find some information for you.

Biosecurity Tasmania, the RSPCA, Australian Maritime Safety Authority and the Victorian Department of Economic Development's jobs training resources are all conducting investigations into the deaths of the 59 cattle on the MV *Statesman*, which occurred on 30 and 31 January this year. The matter has not been finalised yet, so an investigation report cannot be disclosed until that matter has been finalised. We await that.

## **Output Group - Policy Advice**

### **9.1 Policy Advice**

**CHAIR** - Moving on to 9.1, Policy Advice. Obviously this area has had a significant decrease. What is happening in the policy advice area when there is no group allocated to it?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That is a good question. Those allocations would have gone to that output group in isolation but have now been spread about across other output groups. People are still there, but it has been allocated across other areas of output groups, as I understand it?

**CHAIR** - It is a lot of advice - \$2 million.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - It does a lot of things across the whole agency. The RTI, ministerial support, major policy projects and legislation drafting functions and so on are mostly done out of that group. It works right across the agency so the decision was made to fold it back into the agency, and then spread the cost across all output groups because they deliver a service on behalf of all output groups. Rather than have a sort of standalone group, they work right across the agency.

**CHAIR** - So we are still getting the policy advice, but we are not pigeonholing it?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - We have consolidated it into a corporate function that is available across the agency.

**CHAIR** - Moving on to grants and subsidies, capital investment. I have some questions about the ongoing grant funding. Is it reviewed regularly when grantees bid for more funding? Or is what they have been allocated, what they are likely to get for quite some time? I am interested in how that works.

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - Yes, it is consistent. There is a budget process. Government has historically sought submissions from groups and those submissions are fed into the budget process.

**CHAIR** - How many organisations? I am happy for you to table them, if need be, minister. I do not expect you to read them all out.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We have whole agency figures, so environmental and parks as well.

**CHAIR** - Which is not your bailiwick.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The grants are: the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Resources - \$2.605 million; Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture - \$1.958 million; and Inland Fisheries Service - \$1.123 million.

**CHAIR** - Is that about it?

**Dr WHITTINGTON** - In the way this is tabled, yes. However, other smaller grants paid to organisations are paid separately from that list.

**CHAIR** - Can we get the list relating to this area from the minister at a later time? We are very happy to take that on notice, thank you, minister. Members, any other questions about grants and subsidies or capital investment programs? There is not a lot of money in capital investment programs, so can we have the detail of that, thanks, minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Capital investment program, yes.

**Mr PEARCE** - The bit in the table you are seeing is the capital maintenance expenditure component of the KIP. The large part, the capitalisation, is on page 911, table 911. For this portfolio on table 911, there are two items: films, \$1.15; and the increase in biosecurity capability, \$2 -

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. There is always an explanation and we just need to find it because nothing runs in sequence as the minister probably knows from his time on the other side of the table. If that is all for that area, I invite Inland Fisheries officials to the table?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Welcome, John Diggle, Director of Inland Fisheries Service.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, I have a question on the 2019 world flyfishing championships, which will be held in Tasmania. Obviously we are moving towards ensuring we have the right infrastructure in place. What lakes will it take place in?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, we are certainly working towards ensuring it is a pleasurable experience for all who attend. We are expecting a big influx of keen flyfishermen to the state in 2019. It is an opportunity to tell the world about Tasmania's recreational angling. It is anticipated teams from 30 countries will come to Tasmania, which is terrific exposure, and it is estimated about 800 anglers will participate. They will stay wherever they like to stay, Launceston and Devonport. It is held at the end of 2019, from 24 November to 7 December.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Where is that centred, minister?

**Mr DIGGLE** - They will be based out of Launceston.

**CHAIR** - Where will they fish?

**Mr DIGGLE** - The fishing will be in a zone outside of Launceston.

**CHAIR** - So you cannot tell us; it is a secret?



**Mr DIGGLE** - No, the finalisation of venues is determined closer to the event. They look in an hour-and-a-half radius by vehicle from Launceston. They choose which ones they settle on depending on the prevailing conditions at the time. It will be places like the South Esk, the Meander River -

**CHAIR** - What about Waterhouse?

**Mr DIGGLE** - No, I do not think it will be at the Waterhouse,. Potentially it would be at Four Springs Lake or maybe Arthur's Lake. They will finalise those venues later.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Hopefully not weather like we are having at the moment.

**Mr DEAN** - That brings me to my next question. I have been approached by the Shack Owners' Association of Arthur's Lake. I accept what they are telling me, which is that the camping area around Arthur's Lake is a slum. The infrastructure there is not good. There seems to be no proper control over the campers and what is happening there. I do not know whether that is accepted or not. Are there any plans afoot for improving the infrastructure and camping areas around our lakes?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I would like to improve the areas for our anglers as much as financial resources will allow so that it is a pleasant experience for all. I know we have invested a lot in the anglers access program and the like. John, would you like to speak more specifically to that? I have not heard such feedback before, discounting the need for improvement, but -

**Mr DEAN** - I am aware funding to improve and increase the number of infrastructure buildings around the lakes, toilets, jetties, picnic areas and so on is being sought. That is to beautify or make these areas better.

**CHAIR** - So this is their first pitch, minister?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Mr Dean.

**Mr DIGGLE** - Yes, I think that will relate to the World Flyfishing Championships, largely in relation to toilets and other facilities for visiting anglers. I think there is a push for that. I was not aware of the issue you raised at Arthur's Lake. We will take that onboard.

**Mr DEAN** - This is a very busy area. The people inland fisheries in this state work very hard and provide a great service. The number of infringements coming out of this area, minister - where are we at with the whitebait and other infringements and licences? Have they gone up or down?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I think there has been a decrease in licences over the years. In terms of compliance activity, John will have those figures. To strengthen our compliance regime, we took the 2014 election north-west-based fisheries officer to strengthen the compliance across the fisheries. That policy has been implemented and that person is engaging well with the community in the north-west. We have some figures for you if you like in terms of offences detected. A total of 10 kilograms of illegally caught whitebait, nine whitebait nets and two graball nets were seized during the period. One person was successfully prosecuted in the magistrates court for the possession of freshwater crayfish. Two people were convicted of four offences for the possession and sale of controlled fish. Three people were

convicted of 10 offences against officers and three people were convicted of 21 whitebait general fishery compliance and breach-of-bail offences.

In terms of some police stats, Mr Dean, you might be interested to know that 3 500 recreational angling licences were checked; in 2014-15, the number was 3 502; and to 20 April this, the number was 4 060 so it has gone up. In the 2014-15 financial year, 191 recreational whitebait licences were checked, and 261 have been checked this year to date. Prosecution offences for the magistrates court - 8 in 2014-15; 36 in 2015-16, to 20 April. Infringement notice offences - 78 in 2014-15, and 129 in 2015-16. Infringement notice offences issued - conditional cautions, 60 in 2014-15, and 47 in 2015-16. So an increase in activity, I would say, and work for our compliance officers.

**Mr DEAN** - How many compliance officers do we have?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - On the north-west, at Liawenee, we have 11 authorised officers who enforce legislation.

**Mr DEAN** - Around the state obviously.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Of course, integrated cooperation with Tasmania Police and Parks and Wildlife has resulted in enforcement activity in those inland waters as well, so good collaboration between the IFS, Tas Police and Parks and Wildlife.

**Mr DEAN** - They do a great job and the feedback you get is very good. During the process last year you talked about carp, and you said we are almost there. Crescent, yes - I think you meant Lake Crescent; Sorell is about to be there, we would hope, so where are we if they had not made that statement last year with Sorell almost there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - The program has been going over 10 years now, so it started in 1995 and no carp have been captured from Lake Crescent for more than nine years, indicating that eradication has been cheap. We have successfully contained the carp to Lake Sorell - to date 40 902 carp have been removed from Lake Sorell, with a lot of work in arduous conditions I would have to say. I can only imagine the environment in which this work is undertaken. Having met the officers and other carp eradicator, nine months or so ago, my hat goes off to them.

At the current rate of removal, it is expected that the carp will be eradicated from Lake Sorell by 2017-18. The federal parliament's newly announced National Carp Control Plan, which obtained some media exposure, have no direct relevance for Tasmania, being primarily a Murray-Darling Basin initiative. However, they may be consulted on carp control measures, given the very good job they have been doing. We provide a current commitment of some \$410 000 per annum for the carp management program, and we will continue to support its eradication at Lake Sorell. It will be a day of celebration when it is verified we have successfully eradicated the carp.

**Mr DEAN** - I think I asked this question last year. Obviously they are still breeding at the same time. How is it done?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - I will ask John to answer the exact method. So we get the context of the resourcing going into it, the Australian Government has provided \$550 000 for the program over the next two years to 30 June 2017. It is a significant resource allocation.

**Mr DIGGLE** - You engage a range of measures to tackle carp. We have a program to try to prevent carp spawning. We want to try to achieve no recruitment, so no new carp coming into the population is part of the strategy. We use barrier nets to block them from wetlands where they prefer to spawn. We also are heavily netting the population, applying gill nets of different sizes to catch different-size carp, and kilometres and kilometres of gill net are being deployed. A lot of effort is being put into this. The main heavy work is fishing down the population at the moment. We are also radio-treating carp. We have implanted carp with radio transmitters that we release back into the lake. A small number of fishers track these carp to where they gather in the lake, which allows us to target our efforts in that location. We deploy a range of techniques to fish the population down.

**Mr DEAN** - Does that have an impact on the other fish - salmon, trout - we want in there?

**Mr DIGGLE** - The gill netting has an impact on trout in the lake, but there is no impact on the golden galaxias, which are native fish. They are too small to be caught in the gill nets. Unfortunately we catch some trout in the gill nets.

**CHAIR** - Collateral damage. Can I have the FTE numbers? Are we still at 20 or a bit over 20 as we were last year? How are we going there?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Staffing levels in 2015-16 were 21.49 full-time equivalents, an increase from 20.9 FTE in 2014-15. Increases are as a result of consequence of filling a position during that year that was vacant at the conclusion of the previous year. As a field-based organisation, approximately 50 per cent of expenditure is on salaries and associated staff costs, and 50 per cent is spent on operating expenses.

**CHAIR** - I have some questions about disabled access at boat ramps. How many boat ramps have disabled access? Is it possible to have disabled access ramps - and self-interest is in this question - at Blackmans Lagoon, the Waterhouse area? This is something that has been talked about - disabled access is key in all our areas of our society now.

**Mr DIGGLE** - We have dedicated access for anglers at Risdon Brook and up at Plenty. They are shore-based access points.

**CHAIR** - It is a fair way from the north east.

**Mr DIGGLE** - We have two dedicated facilities. With the rollout of some of the new pontoons at boat ramps around the state, there is some better provision, but they are not made primarily for disabled access. They do facilitate easier level access on to boats at Great Lake at Bronte Lagoon.

**CHAIR** - Still a long way away from a particular part of the state. Can I suggest this is something that needs to be addressed, because we cannot discriminate in this day and age. I know that it has been posted that it needs to be addressed. I know it would not be deliberate,

but it is the case. I am happy to write a formal request, if required, or is this sufficient to put it into the system?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It would be good to receive a letter and details from your constituents.

**CHAIR** - Constituents. Thank you very much. My final question around that: are any others around the state potentially - not in the patch I was referring to here - for disabled access other than the pontoon structure?

**Mr DIGGLE** - There are several pontoons at different places.

**CHAIR** - But any more in the pipeline?

**Mr DIGGLE** - No. When infrastructure is being developed, that will be considered in the construction, which was not always been the case in the past.

**CHAIR** - No. In this day and age we have an obligation to do that, and we have done that, as legislators. We need to then stump up with the necessary funds.

Members, I invite any other questions - and I can see the member for Hobart looking very keen.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Not at this point in time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to the low lake levels.

**CHAIR** - Where are they?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Not now, they are not.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - They have increased a lot in the last 24 hours.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The question is in relation to when they were at their lowest, whether that significantly impacted on stock. Has there been any noticeable depletion of stock as a result of those low lake levels and food availability?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - It is concerning and was concerning at that time because you have less feed as the lake levels decrease. You can appreciate, to use a farming analogy, 1 000 sheep and if you section off some of the paddock each day, albeit it minimally, then those 1 000 sheep have less to eat, and naturally there is a problem there.

**CHAIR** - You have to get rid of some sheep usually.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - That option was being canvassed in terms of that. With the higher levels at present, that problem has not presented as we thought it could have done.

**Mr DIGGLE** - We have not suffered any major fish kills or anything like that in the fishery, which is a good thing. The biggest issue has been accessing the fishery, getting boats launched onto the lakes. That has been the biggest challenge. As the minister indicated, that

has improved dramatically since the start of May, but in the last 24 hours even more again. We do not see that as a problem next season.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Does this huge deluge present other problems for the fishery?

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - In terms of turbidity in the water and those types of things, potentially, as of the consequence of all run-off. I would hate to see the north-west dams at the moment. With the larger lakes, it might not be a concentrated problem as you might see in smaller farm dams that have fish in them. John, is there an environmental problem with the influx of water?

**Mr DIGGLE** - It is creating some operational issues for us in terms of our fish-trapping at the moment. We trap creeks and rivers for migrating fish and that has become challenging in the last couple of days. There will be some issues for us with some of our infrastructure. There is nothing disastrous, but it will be a challenge in the next week or two.

**Mr DEAN** - Just to identify the area of Arthur's Lake, I raised about the Anglers' Association; it is the area around what they refer to as Lilly Pond. I do not know if that is right or not?

**CHAIR** - I am sure that resonates with somebody.

**Mr DEAN** - Is an area of concern for them.

**CHAIR** - The next fine day, I am sure John will be up there looking at it.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - We will look at that.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Minister, that brings us to the end of today's proceedings. The committee fully appreciates the effort not only yourself but all your team put in to preparing for this day. We do our best to ask a lot of questions and get some good information. Thank you.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Thank you, Chair, and thank you members of the committee for your scrutiny. I appreciate that very much. Thank you to all the people who have joined me on the table too.

**CHAIR** - And those from behind who continually pass those notes.

**Mr ROCKLIFF** - Yes, they do a great job.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**The committee adjourned at 5.41 p.m.**

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