

# UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Wednesday 5 June 2013 - Estimates Committee B (O'Connor) - Part 1

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Wednesday 5 June 2013

#### MEMBERS

Hon Ivan Dean  
Hon Kerry Finch  
Hon Mike Gaffney  
Dr Vanessa Goodwin  
Hon Tania Rattray (Chair)  
Hon Adriana Taylor

#### IN ATTENDANCE

**Hon. Cassy O'Connor**, Minister for Human Services, Minister for Community Development, Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

#### Ministerial Staff

**Debra Rees**, Head of Office  
**Debbie Hindle**, Senior Adviser  
**Claire Jansen**, Adviser, Climate Change  
**Danielle Goss**, Adviser, Housing  
**Mike Cain**, Adviser, Community Development/Aboriginal Affairs

#### Department of Health and Human Services

**Matthew Daly**, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services  
**David Nicholson**, Deputy Secretary, Strategic Control, Workforce and Regulation  
**Mercia Bresnehan**, Deputy Secretary, Disability, Housing and Community Services  
**Ingrid Ganley**, Director, Disability and Community Services  
**Peter White**, Director, Housing Tasmania  
**Michael Reynolds**, Chief Financial Officer  
**Ross Smith**, General Manager, Shared Services  
**Rod Fazackerley**, Manager, Finance

**Department of Premier and Cabinet**

**Greg Johannes**, Deputy Secretary  
**Wendy Spencer**, Director, Office of Climate Change  
**Nick Evans**, Director Community Development  
**Jeff Reeve**, Director, Corporate Services

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

**DIVISION 9**

(Department of Premier and Cabinet)

**Output group 6**

**Community development -**

**CHAIR** (Ms Rattray) - Welcome, everyone.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - All members would be well across the work of Community Development because it touches on so many people's lives in the policy directions it sets and that level of community engagement. I am very proud of the work our Community Development division does with LGBTI communities, women, seniors, people living with disabilities et cetera. It was a tough budget, but they are all tough budgets at the moment, so there was not a huge amount of capacity within the budget discussions for increases in Community Development, but we have retained funding. In some areas there have been some extra allocations. The LGBTI grants round, which does such fantastic work in the LGBTI communities on the ground, focusing on empowerment for people who are LGBTI and ending discrimination within our community, that grants round will stay at \$50 000 per annum over three years. We were able to secure an extra \$50 000 per annum for the Tasmanian Carers Council to do more of that work they do so well in the communities, engaging with older people and people who are in caring roles. That will increase the capacity of the Carers Council as we develop our carers framework for Tasmania.

You will see in the budget papers there has been a saving of \$216 000 from the need to pay payroll tax. This has come up in committee over the past couple of days so I do not need to talk to you about that aspect of our accounting.

Our commitment to Aboriginal Affairs continues to be evidenced, but we have expanded the Office of Aboriginal Affairs into a stand-alone output group.

**CHAIR** - On our request, minister, was that?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes. We are always listening and trying to help.

**CHAIR** - It does help the committee to identify where funds are allocated. We tried to get you another portfolio yesterday - Aboriginal Heritage. We thought they should go together, but the minister is not going to give it up easily, I can assure you.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - He has put a huge amount of work into it and I can understand why he is going to stick with it.

There are things you can do in the portfolio that do not cost a huge amount of money. The Better Access to Government Services report and recommendations is one of them. We delivered this report late in 2012 and have been gradually working through the recommendations - for example, whole-of-government translator and interpreter policy, making sure our online resources are more readily accessible to people from new and emerging communities, particularly humanitarian entrants. We are going through that. I went to the Migrant Resource Centre a little while back and they have this report on the wall and are ticking it off as they go. There have been some excellent outcomes for humanitarian entrants. In this budget the Aurora concessions are extended to people on bridging visas and in community detention. We were able to negotiate last year with the Minister for Sustainable Transport for Metro concessions to be extended to that cohort. I have spoken to people who work in the sector and they say those small changes can make a huge difference for people on bridging visas and in community detention accessing education, training and employment opportunities. They are wins that do not a huge amount of money.

We have continued our extra funding for the Council on the Aging - \$125 000 per annum, as we have the oldest and the fastest aging population. In Tasmania this is really important work in terms of having, for example, a demographic snapshot of older Tasmanians. That ties in with our work on positive aging.

Ms Taylor you would be very pleased to know that we have so far committed \$50 000 to the Moonah Taste of the World Festival. It gets better year after year, so that is a progressive allocation.

We have launched the Youth Network of Tasmania stress and wellbeing framework for young people balancing work and study, and the Tasmanian Community Fund delivered over \$4.1 million in 2012-13.

That in broad terms is an overview of the fantastic work we are doing in Community Development. We are also reviewing the multicultural policy and delivering a women's plan for Tasmania. So we are busy in community development.

**CHAIR** - So you are doing more with less, which has been the theme over the last two days.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We all are, and doing well within the confines of a tight budget.

#### **6.1 Community development - policy advice and ongoing community development -**

**Mrs TAYLOR** - As you say, minister, in policy advice and ongoing community you deal with so many groups that it must a very interesting portfolio. I know you find it an interesting portfolio and building capacity in individuals and communities is obviously really important.

This year, of course, 6.1 is a significantly lower amount. I understand, of course, that apart from payroll tax, as it says in notes 12, 13 and 14 there have been some ins and outs. You have moved Office of Aboriginal Affairs and Veterans' Affairs, both of those are out of their previous amount, and there are some new bits in. As always, of course, that makes it very difficult for us to ask you specific questions about what is more and what is less. Can you give us a brief breakdown. You have already told us about \$50 000 for LGBTI and \$50 000 for carers and \$125 000 for Council for the Aging, but we would like a breakdown on that \$5.734 million.

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**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for your question, Ms Taylor. We are looking at a quite different budget structure this year. We have two new outputs - Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the Office of Veterans' Affairs - the establishment of new output 6.2 Office of Aboriginal Affairs, and the transfer of the \$935 000 allocation to 6.1 - Community development, policy advice and ongoing community development. The establishment of new output 6.3 Office of Veterans' Affairs transferred \$331 000 from 6.1. There has been a reduction in funding for payroll tax of \$216 000. There has been the partial offset of the decrease by funding of \$50 000 for the Tasmanian Carers Council and funding of \$50 000 per annum for LGBTI grants, which were funded up to 2012-13. So we have extended those grants, which is good news.

In broad terms, that quantum of funding that we had in Community Development in an organisation that underwent something of an internal structure where we broke down illusory walls, but the walls were there, within Community Development, whereas before we had the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Office of Women. All that capacity is still in there but it is a much more collaborative. I would argue that the resources are used more efficiently and effectively as a result. All that work that Community Development has always done in terms of driving policy and reform and engaging with those communities continues, so there has been no diminution of the capacity to do that work. I would argue that because of the restructure it is able to work, because you can pull resources from one area where before you could not. It is more effective.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So the bulk of your \$5.7 odd million is staffing?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Could you tell us the staff numbers - FTEs and what the change is from last year.

[9.15 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Total FTEs in the Community Development division are 39.51 in 2012-13, which is an increase of 0.46 of a human being on last year. Community Development's policy advice and ongoing community development is 32.9 FTEs. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs, 5.56 FTEs - a slight shift from last year when there were 5.7 FTEs.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You have new performance measures. I do love KPIs, but they are a little vague at this point.

**CHAIR** - There was a reference to them being a bit woolly, minister.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Woolly? Who would put that?

**CHAIR** - It just came from some advice we had. I can't tell where we get our sources.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - They are broad, that is all. The statement about what Community Development does is such a broad area.

**CHAIR** - I think we will get a clear picture after the minister has addressed them.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - A clearer picture maybe, Chair. There are two new performance measures within the budget papers. The selected policy outputs must meet the minimum

benchmarks as measured against agreed quality standards. I may ask Mr Evans to translate that for us. Also, satisfaction of key clients with the delivery of policy services, as measured by survey. It is really important in Community Development, particularly because we have a capacity to engage with the community and different community groups, that we have some way of measuring how those communities feel about the service or the policies that are being developed by the Community Development division.

Anecdotally, I am really proud to represent Community Development because when you go out into these communities with a plan for positive ageing, you engage with women on the developing women's plan. We know there is a multicultural advisory committee that is developing our new multicultural policy and there is a strong level of appreciation for the genuine engagement that Community Development undertakes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That is in large part due to your own approach. I know how much all those communities welcome your own very warm and open approach to that. It is absolutely great.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is very sweet; thank you.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I am being real here and I know your staff are nodding. That is a huge credit, but we would like to quantify some of those measures. They are hard to measure.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Intangibles, many of them.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You can measure, maybe, from the people who come or the people who engage, but how do you judge how many and what percentage of people you engage?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - How practically do we do that; it is a good question, Mrs Taylor.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - If you can quantify that a little that would be really good.

**Mr EVANS** - We have over the last couple of years been a little unhappy with some of the performance measures that have been reported in here because they have been a little meaningless - some of them.

**Mr DEAN** - Hence the word 'woolly'.

**Mr EVANS** - We hope these ones are a bit more meaningful than we have done previously, which was effectively to count, for example, how many events occurred in the multicultural community, how many community development events local government held, how many seniors events were held, and just bundle them up, call them a number and say there has been more this year than last year. In terms of the effectiveness of the work we do, that sort of thing does not really give an indication of our effectiveness, because often those things are nothing to do with our work. To bundle them all up and give them one number is pretty misleading. You can see through these two additional performance measures that we needed to move away from that and move to something where we're actually asking our clients what they thought about the work that we did, rather than count a bunch of stuff that really didn't mean very much. We wanted to do that internally, which is what the first performance measure is; policy outputs must meet the minimum benchmark as measured against agreed quality standards. So, within the whole of the Department of Premier - or the policy arm of the Department of Premier and Cabinet - we are now all assessed in terms of the quality of the advice that we provide and the form in which we

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provide it. That assessment process happens internally and is worked through with the secretary and the deputy secretary. They assess the work that we do against that benchmark and we regard them as our internal clients if you like and they provide an assessment of the quality of our work.

You can see there isn't an actual target this year, because this is the first year we've done it for an actual outcome, but in the following years we have targets that we are, both for this purpose and for our own internal purposes, required to meet in relation to the quality of the advice that we provide. We'll provide a written policy brief and we'll get, to put it crudely, a score in relation to that about how we're assessed in terms of meeting the quality requirements of our internal clients. That's what you see recorded in that first benchmark.

**Dr GOODWIN** - So you're aiming for a 9 out of 10.

**Mr EVANS** - We are; we wouldn't want to see it any lower, really. Certainly, as the director responsible for the division, it's very handy for us not just to use it as a means to report here or internally but also as a learning process for the staff so we are able to say, well, this piece of work really only made 75; that doesn't reach our benchmarks. Here are the reasons why and this is how you can improve. It serves a dual purpose of allowing us to report something in relation to the satisfaction of our internal clients, which we think is a little more meaningful, and also enable us to internally continuously improve with staff.

We also want to gauge the effectiveness of our work as viewed by external stakeholders for the community organisations we've been talking about. This performance measure, and another one about effectiveness of grant processes that you'll see in there, both seek to do that. We'll do that; we haven't done it yet because this is the first year we've put it in the budget papers. We started in relation to the grants processes, and we'll do that by survey effectively, and ask them what they think about the work we've done. You'll see we have a target in there so we will be reporting those results. We think that asking our internal and external stakeholders how they regard our work is a much more meaningful way to gauge our effectiveness than just counting stuff.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Will you be measuring that yourself, though?

**Mr EVANS** - Yes, we will.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Written or just verbal.

**Mr EVANS** - It will be written.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Would you do that once a year?

**Mr EVANS** - Yeah, we'd do that once a year.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Minister, in relation to that, we've asked a number of departments and got varying answers; does your staff have annual performance appraisals individually and forward plans for how they are going to improve?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In community development in the division as such?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - In the whole division.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I understand there is a performance appraisal process across all of government, as there should be.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - There should be, indeed.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Of course.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - But we've asked that question and not always got that answer.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Our performance appraisal comes every four or six years and we hope we've done alright. Do you want to talk a bit about the internal performance appraisal process?

**Mr EVANS** - Yes.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Your adviser has just talked, for instance, about an overall score of 9 out of 10 that you're aiming for but that will obviously vary depending how your individual staff and individual sections perform.

**Mr EVANS** - As with the whole of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, every staff member is required to have a performance management plan, an annual one, that they work through with their manager. I have seven people who directly report to me; I am responsible for seven people's performance management plans, all of which are accompanied by an individual work plan that, again, obviously relates to their own branch plans, through their divisional plan and ultimately relates to the DPAC's strategic plan. Those processes are required to be in place for every employee and it happens every year. We're just in the middle of it now.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - And it is carried out every year?

**Mr EVANS** - It is carried out, yes. Like you, I have been in other places where it isn't, but in this division and this department it is.

**CHAIR** - Minister, that explanation for the performance information could never have been put in a note. The notes are useful but they do not always give us the picture we are looking for.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Minister, in terms of the structure of Community Development, is that further broken down into areas?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are people within Community Development who have a specialised policy area, but two years ago we decided to take down some of those invisible walls that existed between the policy units in the Community Development division. We found there was an impact on our capacity to do a broad range of work at the same time. It was a resource issue. In removing those invisible walls, we now have a pool of policy and strategic capacity within Community Development. The feedback I have had from our stakeholders so far is that it is working; it does not appear to them to have affected the output of Community Development and the engagement with the community. The most concern expressed to me about this change is the seeming removal of Women Tasmania as a stand-alone policy unit. I understand that concern but all that capacity is still within Community Development. I feel it is working better now. We are very responsive to the communities we serve so, if issues are identified, we will work to address

them. I still think we have more capacity to undertake a range of policy tasks because of that more open pool of expertise.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Do you have a structure in the sense of a policy branch and another area that looks after grants?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In the Community Development division, which Mr Evans directs, we have a director, deputy director, principal liaison officers, and two admin officers. The policy branch has a total of seven people. There is a manager, a policy analyst - you can see the structures. The seniors card is an example of a program or service that comes out of Community Development. Grants and community engagement is a total of 7.8 people within that area of Community Development. They oversee, for example, the LGBTI grants. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs, which is a stand-alone unit within DPAC, has a total of 5.56 people. There are still some structural divisions within Community Development but it is a much more open structure, less siloed.

**Dr GOODWIN** - So within those structural divisions do they have their own budget allocations they work with?

**Mr EVANS** - No.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Are you able to give us an indication of expenditure to date within Community Development?

[9.30 a.m.]

**REEVE** - These are at the end of April. From the total Community Development division the community expenditure was \$5.2 million.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Is that tracking on budget?

**CHAIR** - Music to the minister's ears.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - When you have pretty clean budget it is important to track well, but it always does in this division.

**Mr DEAN** - Your area is not involved with this Sirolli project in any way, I take it?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No - DPAC.

**Mr DEAN** - My question is in relation to migrants and refugees as to what work you are doing there and what support they have been given. I have some concerns that we are bringing them here but not continuing to look at their financial needs and getting them into work.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is a really good question, Mr Dean. There are obviously humanitarian entrants when they initially come to Tasmania - primarily a responsibility of the Federal government in many ways, for example with their English classes and that sort of thing. We have community and support structures in place to assist humanitarian entrants - the Migrant Resource Centre, Relationships Australia, Red Cross and a whole network of volunteers that wraps itself around new arrivals. Also, because those communities are growing in Tasmania, you are seeing that there is now a stronger structure in place to support new arrivals. It is particularly



people who come in on bridging visas and are in community detention who are at greatest risk of poverty, dislocation and that sort of thing. I have no specific example for you of how the systems are not working for new arrivals but I do know they have particular challenges around language, housing, employment and those sorts of areas where we want them to be able to succeed as fast as possible.

**Mr DEAN** - I think Launceston is probably a good example. We have quite a few in Launceston and I have had a number of them come to me and say, 'Get me some work. Get me a job; I have nothing to do'. They keep saying it and there is not a lot I can do about it. I can simply bring their matters up and put their matters forward all the time. We seem to be filtering them and pushing them all into education. After that, and during that, there is nothing else for them. That is my concern. I have had a number of the Sudanese people, in particular, who have been to me and the Vietnamese people and they have said, 'Get us something to do; we are bored'. And that leads to other difficulties, unfortunately.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We had a not dissimilar experience with some members of the newer communities. There are particular challenges around finding work. A lot of it comes down to challenges with language and possibly to not having had enough. The 510 hours that are funded by the commonwealth, in my view, are not enough for those communities; but there are steps that we are undertaking. The Migrant Resource Centre North has received some funding in previous years that go to that question of expanding employment opportunities for humanitarian entrants. I think it is in about two weeks' time I am attending or hosting a business leaders' breakfast specifically to engage with the business community about the value of employing people from new and emerging communities. J.B. Swift in Longford is an excellent example of an employer that has embraced African workers particularly and is very pleased with the outcome of that because they are reliable, loyal and very hard-working. They are exemplary employees; that is one of the reasons we are hosting this business breakfast. It is to engage with the business community. There is only so much the government policy settings can do. Ultimately, it is a community-wide response and responsibility to ensure that we do not lose these people to mainland centres to get employment. That is ongoing and really important work.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, I would like to know the number of adult migrants who have come into this state in the last three years and the number of those migrants who are in work. Is there any way of identifying that?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The second part of the question I may have to take on notice because I am not sure how easily we would access that information. We certainly have some information on new arrivals.

**CHAIR** - How many are looking for work?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Then you also have to see how many of those are still here because otherwise it is not an accurate figure.

**Mr DEAN** - Launceston is a good example, where they are even trying to set up sporting teams just to occupy these people. You seem to be doing it wrong, in my view.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - And volunteering. Well, I do not think we are doing everything wrong.

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**Mr DEAN** - I am not saying we are doing everything wrong. I think we are doing things wrong.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are some things we are doing right. I do understand your concern, Mr Dean. I think this has been an ongoing problem for new and emerging communities in Tasmania. The Hmong people from Laos had a very significant population here in Hobart up until either six or seven years ago. Then, almost as a whole community, they up and left and we are all the poorer for that. Part of the challenge for us is that there are in the big mainland capitals - Melbourne and Sydney - there are large established communities, for example, Sudanese and Sierra Leone.

Once a humanitarian entrant has successfully been placed in Tasmania, if they cannot find work readily then the lure of work in one of the mainland capitals is almost impossible to resist. Like you, I am sure I have met many community members who are really committed to staying in Tasmania because they love the feel of this place and the connectedness of this community. I do have some numbers here, Mr Dean. It is a breakdown of former humanitarian entrant settlers. Would you like to hear them?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. If it is lengthy minister we could probably -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is not lengthy. I will just give you some key ones. There has been a shift in recent years from predominantly members of former African people - they are still African-Tasmanians - but people who have arrived here from African nations to more Asian nations in recent years. Afghanistan, 42 people - this is from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012. The Bhutanese community has expanded in Tasmania by 253 people; Democratic Republic of Congo, 49. I am not doing all of them and I am very happy to table this, if you like. Burma, the Myanmar population has increased by 54 people in that time. The total of new arrivals in that one-year period was 490 former humanitarian entrant settlers in Tasmania. Eritrea, 27; Iran, 23.

**CHAIR** - Does it say how many have left as well? Do you have that figure?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, I would say it is bordering on the impossible for us to gauge that number because there are constant movements of people into and out of the state. Someone formerly of Sudan who decides to move to Melbourne is not necessarily going to tell the community development division about their plans.

**Mr DEAN** - The other area is accommodation. I am involved with an African family here currently to whom you have been giving some support. So far to my knowledge they have had three moves in about 18 months since I have got to know them, trying to chase cheaper accommodation all the way through to try to make their finances balance. There is obviously no assistance given to these people in that area in accommodation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, I would have to disagree with that. There is certainly in Housing Tasmania; we house a number of former humanitarian entrants in our Housing Tasmania stock. I know there are challenges in the private rental space and I have also spoken, for example, to African families who are finding private rental a squeeze. What I do know, and this is anecdotally and also through conversations I have had in Housing Tasmania, is that African families, for example, are highly regarded by landlords as tenants and certainly in Housing Tasmania we have one example in the northern suburbs of Hobart of a housing unit complex that had been a real problem for the local residents for a number of years until we went through the place, changed all

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the tenants, refurbished it and put African-Tasmanian families in there and all the social problems that existed before have evaporated. I acknowledge that there are real challenges for new arrivals in finding affordable accommodation. We do what we can in Housing Tasmania but we can't discriminate towards those communities or anyone in particular. It is a necessity based on need.

**Mr DEAN** - I suppose you could discriminate. It could be positive discrimination in that regard, because they come here under duress, most of them, and very poor backgrounds and so on normally, so I guess positive discrimination might be acceptable.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, I understand why you would say that, but then where do you draw the positive discrimination line when there are so many needs within different communities? That said, because there will be a number of new arrival families, once they have been through that process, who will have a high level of accommodation need which would put them in those upper categories in the Housing Tasmania assessment process.

**Mr DEAN** - Thanks.

**CHAIR** - Before I go back to Mrs Taylor, minister, can I take you to the number of Seniors Cards and that is in performance information table 10.7. My interest in this is only for others, minister, not for myself.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, of course it is not for you, Madam Chair. Never would any of us suggest that.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I would.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Did you hear that?

**CHAIR** - I did and I am pleased he is right at the end of the table. Disrespectful.

Obviously, with the targets for the issuing of new seniors cards, given that sadly we are an aging population, it seems to me unusual that you would hold it at the same figure over the projected years. Just a comment on that. How do you pick a target but we are reminded daily about we are an aging population, particularly in Tasmania and yet the target remains the same and also the cards issued, the targets seem to be lower than what the actual is?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There tend not to be significant surges in the seniors card program but we currently have on the database 90 603 active seniors card holders.

**CHAIR** - It is scary isn't it?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - A long way off for you, Madam Chair, but each year there are a number of thousands of people who apply for a seniors card in Tasmania and there are a number of businesses who want to sign up to the seniors card because they see the benefit in doing so.

**CHAIR** - A huge increase. If you want to take a look at the figures for signing up to support seniors cards, not so many for the companion cards, but the actual was in 2010-11 is 59 businesses or venues affiliated and then 2011-12 is 109.

[9:45am]

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**Mrs TAYLOR** - But that is new businesses.

**CHAIR** - That is new, that is what I mean it is an increase of 50 businesses or venues affiliated, so obviously they do see the benefit.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is a great outcome. In setting targets it is probably wiser to set a realistic and achievable target and then hope to exceed it.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I was going to go to the same table.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions following on?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes, just a little. The number of businesses, venues and events is finite, so you would not expect to keep on increasing unless you had 100 new businesses every year. You would not expect to have 100 new businesses sign up every year ad infinitum. Do you know how many businesses or what percentage of businesses are signed up to be registered with the seniors card program and the companion card?

**Mr EVANS** - The other thing is that it is also it is balanced off by ones who drop off, either because the business does not exist any more - that is usually the main reason - or for whatever reason they don't want to continue - so we lose some and gain some every year.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - When you say 'new ones'?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - New entrants to the seniors card program.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - How is that balanced by the drop-offs? You don't record the drop-offs? When you say 100 new, is that 100 additional or is that 100 new minus the ones that drop off?

**Mr EVANS** - We run a program and one of the reasons why the number is bigger than it was in the previous year is that every second year we do an active recruitment program, which requires ringing people cold and all the rest of it. We did that last year and we received 109 additional. We lost about 80 in that same period and that is usually, as I said, because the business is closed or people no longer wish to participate.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Is that 109 new or 109 additional?

**Mr EVANS** - It is 109 new, so it is not 109 additional.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is 109 new minus about 80.

**Mr EVANS** - Minus about 80.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So we have about 29 more.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is a fairly constant marketing campaign to engage with businesses to talk to them about the benefits of being part of the seniors card program.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - As I say, it is a finite market. I would like to have some idea of what percentage of businesses are signed up, which is why I asked what the number of businesses is?

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**Mr EVANS** - The number of businesses is 682.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Which is pretty good.

**Mr EVANS** - To be honest, I don't know what percentage that is of the total number of businesses in Tasmania, but there are 682 currently signed.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - That surprises me. I would have thought there were far more.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We will keep working on it, Mrs Taylor. I know it is a long way off, but by the time you have a seniors card we hope to have that up to 800 or more.

**CHAIR** - How does the department actively engage with businesses to support that? What is the process around that, minister?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There is an outreach process.

**Mr EVANS** - As I said, every second year we run a recruitment campaign where we employ someone to cold call or knock on doors and seek people, new businesses, to sign up to the card. That happens every second year. The rest of the time new businesses come along just out of interest or because they see the seniors card directory and get in touch with us because they want to participate in the program. We run a recruitment process every second year. We do that because it is quite expensive.

**CHAIR** - Have we just done that?

**Mr EVANS** - We have just done that. Yes, that is right.

**CHAIR** - So next year's figures will probably be fairly static.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - They probably won't be as strong.

**Mr EVANS** - It is a relatively expensive thing for us to do, so that is why we only do it every second year.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - The new companion cards are issued to people with disabilities?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - To the carers of people with disabilities; that is right.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - So you would have a change in the carers, wouldn't you? You know roughly how many people with disabilities there are, so it is not like an aging thing necessarily, although I know that some people get them as they get older and frailer perhaps, but generally speaking they are for people with disabilities and we know how many people support people with disabilities.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, they are to support people with disabilities.

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**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is not quite a finite number but it is a number you already know. You wouldn't expect that to keep on increasing expedientially except, I guess, if it is for carers; carers change and you get new carers coming into the workforce.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are around 10 000-11 000 Tasmanians living with disability who require some level of support to lead their daily lives so the number of companion cards issued is far, far from that number.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Is it?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, the total number of companion cards as at 11 April is 1 671. But that would be in part because not everyone who lives with a disability is going to need a carer or a support worker within the community. Disability comes in many forms, as you know, Mrs Taylor. Partly it is about raising awareness of the existence of the companion card and the benefits to the support worker or carer and the person living with a disability. So, again, that is part of the ongoing work of the Community Development division.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Would you have a list of contracts and consultancies for this division?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes. I will table this document which includes such things as the Anzac Day Trust, the COTA funding, Moonah Taste of the World, support for Youth Parliament, the Youth Network of Tasmania core funding. The total 2012-13 allocation was \$1.004 million. We do not run many consultancies in Community Development.

**Mr REEVE** - From the list of contracts, Clemenger Tasmania is \$12 993 for the seniors card directory program; Corporate Communications, \$51 890 for the seniors card campaign; e3 Pty Ltd, \$25 948 for the seniors card recruitment program; Women's Creative Aboriginal Corporation, \$18 500 for [inaudible] program.

**Dr GOODWIN** - What about the number boards?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We have a Tasmanian Community Fund board, the Early Years Foundation board and the women's [inaudible] Council, so it is the two boards.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Do you have a figure on the sitting fees for those?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The Tas Community fund is self-funded and the Early Years Foundation would be under the normal remuneration. I hope you are not putting together your list of boards that are superfluous because the Early Years Foundation board does great work.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Can you elaborate a bit on the Early Years Foundation Board?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That comes under the Minister for Children.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Why does it come in under your area?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - When they created the portfolio for Minister for Children, because there is no stand-alone government department for children, it touches on at least three portfolios.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I do not think we have talked much about the new carer's council. I am interested in that because Carers Tasmania do great work and I am sure they would be pleased about the funding. I am interested to find out a little bit more about what it will deliver.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I have a meeting with Janis McKenna from Carers Tasmania in a couple of weeks time to talk about how that relatively small pool of funding over the forward Estimates will be dispersed. We are establishing a carers framework for Tasmania which fits in with a national carer's framework. We are developing a whole-of-government carer's policy and we need to work very closely with Carers Tasmania to do so. Carers Tasmania is really central to the development of the carers framework work. Part of that will include legislative review so that we have a standard definition of carer, which we do not have in our legislative framework at the moment. We released the draft Tasmanian carers policy last November.

Funding has been allocated to Carers Tasmania. They did make a budget submission as part of the normal budget process and I understand it was for a sum considerably higher than \$50 000 a year. We have done what we can in the budget circumstances we are confronted with. It is to build the capacity of Carers Tasmania to respond to the needs of the rapidly growing community of carers in Tasmania, particularly in rural and regional areas because we know that it is carers in rural and regional areas and in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage who can be the most dislocated within our communities. That, as you know, affects their health, wellbeing, economic circumstances and their capacity to care for the person they love.

It really is part of expanding Carers Tasmania's capacity, but we are also going to establish a carers council in Tasmania as part of that framework and that is what we will be talking to Carers Tasmania about in the coming weeks. It is a bit early to detail exactly how those funds will be spent. We will be guided in large part by Carers Tasmania and what it identifies the need to be.

**Dr GOODWIN** - It might be another person on the ground to work with them or you are not sure of that?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Another resource; I would not want to pre-empt that discussion. I am happy with the fabulous Mrs McKenna.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - These papers have obviously been passed by cabinet, by your colleagues. If I turn you to 5.5 in budget page 1. I was really pleased to see the funding there for the LGBTI gender work. I think that is fantastic, and the Tasmanian Carers Council. It looks to me as though there is \$100 000 for each of those because of the inadequacy of our system to have 0.05. If it has been passed, I would not say anything about it and you would have to spend \$100 000.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Mr Gaffney. I did say that to Mike this morning; it is in the papers; it is in print. But unfortunately, no, the money is not there for those programs.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - But you did say it was for the next three years.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Over the forward Estimates.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Four years in the forward Estimates. I think that money is well spent. If you can get more then I think it will be worthwhile. I note your comment about why isn't there a line item for the work you do with the multicultural group.

[10.00 a.m.]

I know you draw that out of your budget, but I would have thought to have that as a dedicated line item for the transgender, lesbian and gay group and the Tasmanian carers have a multicultural group there - I know you support them - but there comes a time when we have to say that is a significant part of our community and they should be able to draw on funds to organise their own festivals. There should be a pool of money set aside for that group. I am wondering whether you would like to comment or whether this has been discussed?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In the 2010-11 budget we made an extra allocation of, from memory, \$100 000 a year to the Migrant Resource Centre, north and south. That was dispersed on a population basis. From memory, MRC South receives \$57 000 a year and the MRC North receives \$43 000 a year, which is part of that capacity building within those communities. I believe what you are talking about is a dedicated pool of funds to support multicultural communities. I would love to have a dedicated pool but we have made the allocation to the MRCs and they are doing great work. We also have contributed every year, since its establishment, to the fantastic Moonah Taste of the World Festival. We support the Multicultural Council of Tasmania with our funding.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - The new African communities.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The Multicultural Friends of Parliament is here. That is a no-cost endeavour, which is very effective for multicultural communities. We run it off the side of Mike's desk and now the Multicultural Friends of Parliament runs itself.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - They are not no cost - low cost.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We regard providing that secretariat support to the Multicultural Friends of Parliament as a core business activity, for want of a better term. There are funds going into multicultural community development. There is no significant extra money within this budget but there are a whole lot of things we are doing that have a significant effect for multicultural communities. We are currently working with an advisory committee on renewing the multicultural policy for Tasmania and that is very much guided by the community's input. That comes at a human resource cost from within Community Development but it is part of core business. We need to update our multicultural policy because the multicultural landscape in Tasmania has changed very significantly in the last 10 years.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is changing and morphing into something bigger. I know there is funding and support but there is something about when different groups come to us, such as hospitality, they want their own line item even though there is no money. They want to be recognised at that level because it is such an important thing in the future to launch other things from. If there is a multicultural funding pool then you can access federal or other issues.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - With respect, it would be a bit hard. It would be going back, in some ways, to the old structure. We could have a line item for youth, a line item for women, multicultural affairs, when it is all part of the business of Community Development. We need to have the flexibility within the division to focus on a particular policy area or strategy at a particular time, and at the same time doing a whole lot of other policy work within the division.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is nice to know your staff is low cost. Good on you, Mike.



**Ms O'CONNOR** - But high maintenance, Mr Gaffney.

*Laughter.*

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, the community sector workforce development plan, how does that figure in your department? It was released in May but how are you working with that?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That comes under my area of Human Services. There is sector workforce development that is being undertaken in collaboration with the Peaks Network and the Tasmanian Council of Social Services, that has a good snapshot of the sector in Tasmania and looks at its future training needs and those other workforce development needs. I am happy to talk about it more in human services because there is a huge amount happening in that area, particularly as a result of the equal remuneration order, the Fair Work Australia hearing, national school insurance scheme, so the sector in Tasmania has between 9 000 and 10 000 workers, identified within it and is undergoing very significant change.

**CHAIR** - Hold those thoughts.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You have mentioned several times the Moonah Taste of the World, because we both enjoy that and think it is wonderful, but you said \$50 000. Are you looking over the four years? How much a year are you talking about?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - For the past two years we have contributed \$10 000 towards the festival.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - The first year you contributed \$20 000.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The first year, I think you were mayor, Mrs Taylor, we contributed \$20 000. I have a very strong view that we should continue to provide some level of support for the Moonah Taste of the World Festival. It just grows year after year. It is the most wonderful, wonderful festival.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Could you do something about the weather?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, that was wicked last year.

**Mr FINCH** - Climate change?

**CHAIR** - That is in a later output.

*Laughter.*

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Are you talking about \$10 000?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We are certainly looking to continue to support it, but I have written to council a number of times making it clear that the expectation is that the festival will become self-funding over time, but that could take some time. Within our very small pool of discretionary funds we find that money to support the festival because it delivers very significant community development benefits.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Did you answer my question about are you looking at \$10 000 a year or what sort of amount are you providing?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We will just look at it on the basis of the request that comes in from the Glenorchy City Council. I cannot recall if we have had any feedback from this last festival.

**Mr EVANS** - We have had a report acquitting last year's \$10 000, but we haven't had a request for next year yet.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I am sure we will.

## **6.2 Office of Aboriginal affairs -**

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, a new output so it is understandable that the next four years have been given a figure for \$936 000 to deal with. I would be curious about how that money is to be spent at this stage? What this new output means, Aboriginal Affairs, and the sort of things the department or your people will be focusing on?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for your question, Mr Finch. Yes, we now have a separate output budget in Aboriginal Affairs and I have a breakdown of how that budget will be spent. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania receives \$314 000 per annum. In last year's budget we were able to allocate an extra \$90 000 per annum to the Aboriginal Land Council because it was becoming increasingly clear that ALC was having trouble exercising its statutory duties as a land manager in Tasmania. They faced annual financial viability concerns so we increased the funding to the Aboriginal Land Council, in order to address those concerns, and give them a greater capacity in terms of land management activities on lands that have been returned to the Aboriginal community.

Within the Office of Aboriginal Affairs budget we have the Aboriginal first home buyer's scheme, which has a \$30 000 per annum allocation. It is a recurrent payment to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre to assist with stamp duty for first home buyers within the Palawa community. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs staffing costs - \$481 000 which funds a total of 5.7 FTEs. There is a \$20 000 allocation under the Safe At Home program to address Aboriginal family violence challenges. Within the budget there is property services and consumables of \$90 000, which includes rent, property services and all those items you need to run a bureau or office.

**Mr FINCH** - So it's not hard to allocate that funding.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it is all pretty clear to me.

**Mr FINCH** - Are these the main focus areas for Aboriginal Affairs now with this funding? Has your focus been able to change into other areas, given your more expansive role in the area of Aboriginal Affairs?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is a good question, Mr Finch. There have been a number of changes that have changed, if you like, the work of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. The issue of eligibility was a body of work the Office of Aboriginal Affairs spent a great deal of time on assessing and making determinations on applications for government-funded Aboriginal services and programs. I am sure you are aware that caused a significant amount of angst within Aboriginal communities so we currently have a different eligibility regime, if you like, and I am

happy to talk about that in more detail later, but the Office of Aboriginal Affairs will no longer be the centralised point for assessment of eligibility other than for employment within the State Service.

For example, if a person wants to apply for Aboriginal housing in Tasmania they go to Housing Tasmania with a letter of endorsement from a number of identified Aboriginal organisations. The process is much simpler for that individual because after a small process within the agency that letter is evidence enough of eligibility, so that pressure has been taken off the Office of Aboriginal Affairs there.

In terms of the other areas we are focusing on, we have delivered a dual-naming policy for Tasmania. We were the only Australian state or territory without a dual-naming policy. It was a body of work that we undertook in very close consultation with the Aboriginal community, particularly the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre which had written to me almost two years ago now saying, 'Do you realise we are the only Australian state or territory that doesn't have that respect for Aboriginal history and culture imbedded within its nomenclature?'. That policy went through cabinet last year and we announced it in March this year.

So Mount William is wukalina - palawa kani is a beautiful language - Oyster Cove is putalina, and the palawa name for Tasmania is lutriwita. As a result of this policy, over time these will become dual names so it will be kunanyi for Mount Wellington and wukalina for Mount William. Fundamentally it is about respect for a culture that was here for 40 000 or more years before the arrival of the first Europeans. That was a very significant body of work that the Office of Aboriginal Affairs undertook. We are also working to progress land returns which are before your committee, the areas of larapuna and Rebecca Creek, which is about 158.4 hectares in total, and we await eagerly the outcome of your committee's deliberations and the ultimate vote in this place.

The work the Office of Aboriginal Affairs is doing continues to be at a very high level of engagement with the Aboriginal community and the broader community, but some of those administrative roles that OAA did before have now been removed so they can focus on policy areas rather than angst-ridden eligibility processes.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, would you like to talk now about that eligibility process and where we are with that - and the implications and complications of it?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I think we talked about this at reasonable length last year.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I think it might have been the year before because I could not find any reference to it last year but I do remember the conversation about it.

[10.15 a.m.]

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There has been a whole-of-government policy on eligibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific programs and services delivered by government. It has been in place since 2006. From the moment I became Minister for Aboriginal Affairs it was made very clear to me, as it is to a number of people in the community, that the eligibility processes we were having to undertake in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs were lengthy, resource-intensive and very stress-inducing for people who were making applications. Those eligibility processes made very few people happy, even those who were successful in having their eligibility confirmed.

The previous Minister for Aboriginal Affairs undertook - and then I inherited the issue - to review the eligibility policy and the process to determine eligibility now is much less administratively complex than it was before. I believe it is working well so far, fingers crossed. What happens now is if a person wishes to apply for an Aboriginal program or service, rather than making an application to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs around their eligibility, they need to provide confirmation of communal recognition. In Housing Tasmania that is what you need to be eligible for Aboriginal housing.

**Mr FINCH** - Would that recognition come from the TAC?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, it is much broader than that. I have a list here of organisations that may be able to assist someone seeking access to Aboriginal-specific services and programs: the Aboriginal Health Service of Hobart; the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre; the Aboriginal Health Centre at Launceston; the Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association; the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association; the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in Launceston; the Aboriginal Health Service in Burnie; the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in Burnie; the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council in North Hobart; and the Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania. That is not a definitive list but something at least to guide people looking to have a smoother process of application for Aboriginal-specific programs and services.

**CHAIR** - So if there is an organisation not on the list, they still aren't restricted? I am thinking of the Circular Head Aboriginal community.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As I said, it is not a definitive list. It is up to government agencies to assess each application on its relative merits.

**CHAIR** - So there is flexibility around that list?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We are trying to be very flexible.

**Mr FINCH** - Minister, do you have any numbers in respect of the increase in people who are now eligible for services or are recognised as Aboriginal?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Not really. The only one is the ALCT electoral roll - I think that would be the most complete.

**Mr EVANS** - Yes. I guess the ALCT electoral roll would be the largest register of people who have had their Aboriginal identity assessed. Even so, that has approximately 3 500 to 4 000 names on it, whereas if you look at the ABS data from the 2012 census the numbers identified through that process are closer to 19 000-20 000 people.

**CHAIR** - So there are a lot of people not on that register?

**Mr EVANS** - There are a whole lot of reasons for that, not all of which are to do with whether or not they are assessed as Aboriginal. A lot of people do not want to participate. Even when we were doing it in the Office in Aboriginal Affairs we would be able to say how many assessments we had done but we would not necessarily be able to say how many people in Tasmania had identified as Aboriginal. It wouldn't be my anecdotal experience that the change in this process has resulted in a large number of additional applicants being found to be Aboriginal.

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The minister has been particularly talking about the Aboriginal housing program. That is by far the biggest Aboriginal program in Tasmania. It accounts for 70-80 per cent of the applications that are made or were previously made around eligibility, so the experience in that program accounts for the biggest percentage of whether or not people are found to be eligible for Tasmanian government Aboriginal programs. The other numbers, say in DPIPWE for fishing licences and those for mutton-birding and all those sorts of things, are in the tens.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Not education either. I would have thought there were a number of people who would take advantage of scholarships.

**Mr EVANS** - There are a few state government scholarships but, again there, you are talking fewer than 10 of those. Large numbers of the Aboriginal education programs are commonwealth funded and by and large they don't fall under the ambit of this policy.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - They would still need to be recognised, though, wouldn't they?

**Mr EVANS** - They would, but the commonwealth has a different approach to this than this state government has and that is across all perspectives. They still need to be acknowledged to be Aboriginal by the people who are running those programs.

**Mr FINCH** - I am wondering, minister, is there a need for this to be tracked more closely? We have heard different figures mentioned there. Do we need to have some sort of definitive list of people who are eligible for programs and for support so that we can keep a track of the numbers and the development in this area of people who are eligible for support and help?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I am not sure about developing a list. There are obviously people whose eligibility for programs and services have already been determined who are accessing those services. I am not sure what the benefits of a centralised list would be because anyone who is not on that list who self-identifies as Aboriginal may feel aggrieved.

**Mr EVANS** - Currently, the first stage of a process where somebody goes to Housing is for Housing to come to us and say, 'Because we used to do this, have you previously ever assessed this person?' So we do have a list of the people who were previously assessed. The view over the years has been that it is not really appropriate to have a list of people in government sitting somewhere that says you are of a particular race or not. There is something about it that just doesn't sit comfortably. When we were administering this process and continuing on, we see it very much as an administrative thing. Even though it is splitting hairs and a bit disingenuous in some ways, in administering the program we and the agencies who are still administering it don't want to be seen to be putting a government stamp on someone's identity. What they want to be doing is saying you are eligible for this program or you are not eligible for this program.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - If you apply, you ask.

**Mr EVANS** - That is right and I think we have always thought that keeping a list was much more tending into the government is the body that is going to determine your own identity and that is not really a space that I don't think anyone has felt comfortable in as a proper role for government. What we want to do is find out whether you are eligible for the program. I accept that is a little disingenuous, but I think we have to try to keep that separation; otherwise my own personal view is that we are overstepping the mark in defining what someone's self-identity actually is.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Mr FINCH** - Thanks. I just wanted to explore that.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Could I ask one question on that? In terms of the process, if they do go to say, Housing, and they want to access Aboriginal housing and their eligibility is determined as they are eligible, if they then want to access another program or service through a different agency do they have to go through that again or is it much easier once they are -

**Mr EVANS** - No, once they are assessed once by Housing they notify us. We don't do the assessment but we are just told that they have been assessed as eligible and with the agency who they might be going to a second time, the process is that they come to us first and ask us, 'Has anyone else assessed this person before?' and if the answer is yes they don't have to worry.

**Dr GOODWIN** - So there is a sort of informal list.

**Mr EVANS** - There is a sort of informal list.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Just to streamline the process which is important so that people don't need to keep going through.

**Mr EVANS** - That is right.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is an informal list of people who have asked, not an informal list of people who might be.

**Mr EVANS** - Exactly right.

**Mr FINCH** - On table 10.12, page 10.24, there is a mention here of works and services and there are no figures in there. Is that your history with future expansion of the budget where more money might be in there for works and services?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In the Office of Aboriginal Affairs?

**Mr FINCH** - Yes.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We do not do many building works.

**Mr FINCH** - But it is in there. It is recurrent services, that is our \$936 000 each year and then underneath works and services with no money allocated to that. I am curious about why that would be in there in the first place.

**Mr REEVE** - The works and services, there really isn't any for community development that is specifically allocated.

**CHAIR** - Why is it there?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Treasury told us to put it there.

**Mr REEVE** - It is there to hold over for a capital budget allocation if we had any capital budget allocation necessary for the department but we don't have any. The only works and

services that we have in the department is the Service Tasmania shops and we do not have any in DPAC for any capital.

**CHAIR** - I heard yesterday that there were no questions to a minister in relation to the budget papers. You will be pleased to know, minister, that you are getting questions relating to the budget papers. I thought that was a positive.

Minister, I take you to the table 10.7 for this area. We have already touched on it with the seniors cards but underneath, it indicates the number of licences issued.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - This is a for cultural activities?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Out of those 19 000 people who have indicated their Aboriginality through the census process, that is a pretty low number, isn't it? Or it appears to be? Is that something that you have gauged as well?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - These are individuals who have directly applied for a licence to undertake a cultural activity. There will be a range of different interests within the Aboriginal community. But as at 16 April this year, a total of 86 Aboriginal people were issued permits for cultural hunting, fishing and gathering activities. For example, two for the gathering of shellfish; five to collect, possess and sell products of protected wildlife, for example echidna quill and bone; feathers and skin of various species; six for the gathering of swan eggs; 71 cultural mutton birding permits; and -

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Only seven mutton-birding permits?

**CHAIR** - 71.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There was a change because the short-tailed shearwater population has been fluctuating, to put it mildly, quite significantly in recent years. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs has been working with DPIPWE and the Australian government. That is the cultural harvest at Fort Direction at South Arm. As a result, harvesting was permitted. However, it was restricted to two weekends with the same bag limit as that of 2012. I also recall there were restrictions on birding a couple of years ago, particularly up in the north-west, as a result of a decline in the short-tailed shearwater population for that year. The issuing of licences has to be responsive to what is happening within that wildlife population.

**CHAIR** - Do you think that those figures reflect the number of people with Aboriginal heritage who are undertaking those? It probably would not necessarily reflect. Do you think that would be a fair comment?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I do not think I could speculate on that. These are the people who apply for a licence to legally undertake an activity. I would not want to speculate on that.

[10.30 a.m.]

**Mr EVANS** - In relation to the fishing licence, for example, you are not, as an Aboriginal, required to have a licence to fish. They are provided to people who, if they are being policed, are able to demonstrate their Aboriginal identity easily and readily. If people want the option to be able to mark on their buoy or craypot, for example, 'This is an Aboriginal pot and I have a licence', they are left alone, as opposed to someone coming along and asking the question. It is

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true to say that does not reflect the number of people who identify as Aboriginal, just the number of people who prefer to get the licence so they do not have to be followed up and asked. It is less hassle.

**Mr DEAN** - I take it the licences issued in these situations are identified to a specific area of the state?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Are they geographically-specific or activity-specific?

**Mr DEAN** - Do they relate to areas that are otherwise protected?

**Mr EVANS** - No. I will talk about mutton-birding separately. In relation to hunting and fishing, they are not geographically defined. For example, mutton birds are a protected species and hunting is not able to be done. There are some small numbers of people who are able to do things because they have cultural requirements. Mutton-birding is different. The permits that are issues are only for Fort Direction at South Arm, a Defence department property. This year it is for three specific weekends, over three weekend periods. It is not a general application.

**CHAIR** - What about on the Furneaux Group?

**Mr EVANS** - There is birding there, yes.

**Mr DEAN** - Do these licences restrict them to a certain quantity in the areas they are issued for?

**Mr EVANS** - Yes, they do.

**CHAIR** - The birds are not everywhere.

**Mr DEAN** - No, they are not. My other question is on the gathering of cultural materials. I suspect that relates to shells and that sort of thing. What else would fit into that category?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As you have identified, Mr Dean, it would be a gathering of materials for cultural activities; those exquisite shell necklaces would be part of that. There are other things here: the echidna quill and bone, feathers and skin of various species, the gathering of swan eggs and shellfish.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I have a question around the Safe at Home allocation. Could you elaborate on that, please?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is provided to undertake Safe at Home programs within their communities. It is not a large allocation; only \$20 000.

**Dr GOODWIN** - I am interested in Safe at Home and family violence and I would like a bit more detail around the work that is being done in the community.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It would be a small pool of funding because they would be one of the Safe at Home partners. Like all Safe at Home partners, they have a role to play in preventing family violence within their own communities.



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**Mr EVANS** - It is to facilitate people from the Aboriginal community to travel and come together, raise awareness and talk about strategies they can put in place within their communities.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - If we can go back to table 10.7, we have talked about Aboriginal people issued licences but the next section is the number of Aboriginal-identified positions in the State Service that are filled by Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islanders. You had a pretty ambitious jump in this current year. It has been 56 for the last two years and from 2012-13 you had an ambition to go to 65. How has that gone? Have you achieved this?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you for your question, Mrs Taylor. I am advised that there are 77 positions within the state service that are dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander roles. So we are hoping to encourage more uptake among the Aboriginal community of those positions.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - There is an exemption under antidiscrimination to advertise specifically positively. So have we got to 65? We are just about at the end of 2012-13 financial year.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We are definitely at 62; so in the 2012-13 financial year, 62 of the 77 positions were occupied by a Tasmanian Aboriginal person.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - You have not increased the target for next year. Are you thinking you are never going to get to 77?

**MR EVANS** - I think we would probably see where we ended up this year and look at that.

**Mr DEAN** - In relation to land return, minister, does the government have a future plan for the further return of lands to the Aboriginal community?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is an ongoing government policy to return lands of cultural significance that are identified by the Aboriginal community. We have two parcels of land as land returns before your House. The Tasmania Together target, from memory, was to have 90 000 hectares of land returned to the Aboriginal people. To date, we have returned 55 000 hectares of land.

**Mr DEAN** - Are there any specific areas outside of those two that we are currently dealing within this House that have been identified for return in the near future - within the next three years, say?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Certainly there is an ongoing conversation with the Palawa community around areas of land that they wish to have returned. Mount William is one area which they identify very strongly with and wish to have returned. As you may know, the previous Premiers, Jim Bacon and David Bartlett made a commitment to progress the return of Mount William. There is also a very strong desire on the part of the Palawa community to have Rocky Cape returned to their people. There is no specific area of land at the moment beyond the two parcels that are before your House. It is an ongoing conversation with the Aboriginal community.

**Mr DEAN** - The only other two areas are the areas you mentioned - Rocky Cape and Mount William?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - No, they are not the only two areas, the Aboriginal community has put forward a number of areas. They are two of the most significant but the Aboriginal community's land returns wish list, if you like, is nothing new. It has been a topic of conversation between the

palawa community and governments current and previous. I am sure in the future there will be continued calls for the return of those culturally significant lands.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that wish list available? Has it been identified as a government -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I use the term wish list probably unwisely and loosely. There are areas of land that the Aboriginal community very much wants to have returned. We made the decision to seek to return larapuna because it has an extended lease with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and is a place that is very strongly in the hearts of the palawa people, and Rebecca Creek, which is a culturally significant area on the north-west coast. We believed they were achievable land returns within the timeframe that we had, of course. An area like Mt William National Park has a lot more layers of complexity around it. It is a national park, although there are models interstate, for example, on North Stradbroke Island, the Quandamooka people have had the Stradbroke Island National Park returned to them, so they are the owners of that land, but they are also the park managers and you can still visit the national park on Stradbroke Island where I grew up. There are models for returning protected land to the Aboriginal people, but it is an ongoing body of work and in this term, and certainly in my term as minister, we have been focused on the return of larapuna and rebecca creek.

**The committee suspended from 10.41 a.m. to 10.59 a.m.**

## **Minister for Climate Change**

### **Output group 1 Climate Change -**

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about some of the work being undertaken in this space. The climate change office, which is quite a small unit of seven FTE equivalents that punches above its weight. We have over the course of the past three years delivered a climate action plan for Tasmania and progressed a number of the recommendations and initiatives in that action plan, particularly around energy efficiency, forest carbon, one of the recommendations was to increase the uptake of renewables and it is now the government's policy to deliver a smart grid for Tasmania's electricity network, which will make sure that we are using our transmission infrastructure much more efficiently and that we are empowering customers to take much greater control over their own energy use. That is progressing through DIER and in cooperation with Aurora.

We have also recently released a low-carbon issues paper for Tasmania. It is a consultation paper that looks at nine key areas of our economy and how we can work collaboratively to lower our emissions profile. Tasmania's emissions, while low in comparison to other Australian jurisdictions because we have that natural advantage of being reliant largely on renewable power, are still higher per capita emitters in Tasmania than the UK, Germany and Brazil, for example. We do need to bring down our emissions and we are tracking reasonably well on the last information that has come out of the national greenhouse gas inventory.

Under the Climate Change (State Action) Act we have a legislated emissions reduction target of 60 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050. The most recent advice that has come out of the review of the act is that we are on target to reach our target and about half of those emissions reductions

will come about as a result of the carbon pricing framework, the clean energies future framework, but also that means that about half of our emissions reduction activities are going to have to come about as a result of state-based activities. The low-carbon issues paper will be consulted widely and we are undertaking a series of round tables with different businesses and community sector organisations. It looks at agriculture, waste, government emissions, emissions from transport, and the like and proposes a series of actions.

In broad economic terms I know there is a range of views on how much effort a jurisdiction like Tasmania should invest in climate mitigation activities. As I said before we do have a very high per capita footprint but economically it makes huge sense for us to recognise that the world is moving to a low carbon future, recognise the huge opportunities available to small, medium and large businesses in bringing down their emissions and looking at the whole way we conduct our business in order to make sure we reach our emissions reductions target.

I think that we are tracking quite well as a state. We primarily draw our power from hydro power about 87 per cent of our electricity consumed in recent years came from hydro power - but we are still importing over Basslink. We should be exporting clean power and more of it into Victoria, for example, which is still quite heavily dependent on fossil fuel generated power.

I commend the low-carbon issues paper to you, but it is also the work of the Adaptation Unit, which is a very small unit within the climate office that has been undertaking an awesome range of work, particularly with local councils around adaptation planning. It is a fantastic project that was, in part, funded through the commonwealth but the adaptation unit helped to secure those funds with the Break O'Day, Kingborough, Latrobe and Clarence councils that engaged communities in identifying their concerns around adaptation, their priorities and how they would wish to respond.

It was really important guidance for the adaptation unit in terms of talking to all Tasmanians - coastal councils particularly - around adaptation planning for sea level rise, storm surge, inundation, erosion and the like. Just last week I launched the Southern Tasmanian Council Authority's adaptation strategy which is an excellent document that provides guidance to councils, council planners and property owners around adaptation planning because Tasmania is changing - we know that - and it will change more in future years. The work that the adaptation unit does specifically at the interface with local government is critical and the feedback that we are getting is that local government really appreciates the guidance that they are getting from the Adaptation Unit.

Finally, another really important body of work that the adaptation unit has been undertaking was on the development of the sea level rise planning allowance which again provides guidance around built infrastructure and activity in coastal areas accounting for it. It uses the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change projections and it projects a 20 centimetre change on 2010 levels by 2050 and an 80 centimetre increase by the turn of the century. Those projections, of course, may be modest because climate science is changing constantly, but we also have for the first time in Tasmania a series of coastal inundation maps so people can now go to the list and have a look at the particular vulnerability of their property along the coastline, which is a really important tool, particularly for local councils, but also for property owners in coastal areas. What those coastal inundation maps tell us, sadly, is that by the turn of the century there are places that are very dear to all of us that will either look very different or not quite all be there anymore.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

This work is so important for government and the adaptation work it engages in and the Climate Change Office's broader work on mitigation are the things that I am most proud of about it. It is engaging with all government agencies on climate action; the government has reduced its own emissions by about 12 per cent in the past year, so there is a really proactive approach to bringing down our emissions and energy use. But there is also vital work being done in Tasmania to make sure that we adapt to climate change, that we are resilient community and that we can prosper in the face of what will be a very different climate in the future.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, for that very detailed overview, but very interesting, and I feel sure that members will have a number of questions.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I not the interesting comments about the sea level rise and about some places not being there. The thing I liked about the staff that worked at Latrobe on that project, and still working with it, is that they said, 'No, these are the options available. If you want it still to be there in 50 to 60 years time, this is what you may have to do.' There are some decisions there and I think that was a really interesting point. I know that other members are interested in this area, so I might ask some overview questions which I hope covers some of those. Last year the budget was \$1.581 million and this year it has been increased to \$1.75 million. It says in the footnotes that it is solely for additional funding for the coastal, regional and sector-based climate change adaptation initiative. Will the whole \$169 000 go to that or is there any other costs associated with that increase?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The new money that has gone into the portfolio is the coastal adaptation planning project that we are undertaking, but in terms of some of the movements within the budget, we have completed the forest carbon study, which was a \$250 000 allocation in the 2010-11 budget and we had \$50 000 that we spent finalising that work last year, which is another body of work that came out of the action plan to reduce emissions. We now have the best picture we have ever had in Tasmania of the amount of carbon that is stored in our forest estate, which is estimated at about 3.3 billion to 3.4 billion tonnes. That is one movement in the budget. There is a payroll tax deduction of \$62 000, which has affected the bottom line. They are the only movements within the budget.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Last year there were 6.3 FTEs in the Tasmanian Climate Change Office, which was a reduction of 1.1 from 2011-12. How many FTEs are there at the moment?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are 7.49 FTEs in the office.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That is what you are expecting it to stay at?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, that is.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - What are the employee-related expenses and non-employee related expenses for the Climate Change Office?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Some of it will be the grants we administer. Primarily, the employee expenses would be salaries.

**Mr REEVE** - The break-up is employee-related expenses of \$1.172 million and the non employee-related expenses are \$575 000.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

**Ms SPENCER** - They include the grants program. I think we talked about the grants program in previous years providing community support for both adaptation and on emission reduction activities. It also includes the office expenses and the cost of doing business in the public service, phones and computers.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That is good, because for the extra employee there was only a \$22 000 increase on last year, so you are paying someone very cheaply there.

**Ms SPENCER** - We are doing more with less.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - The ClimateConnect grants - how much funding has been allocated for those? Perhaps, minister, you might like to give us a couple of examples of what the money was spent on last year because I know that that is interesting information.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There will be \$120 000 available in the 2013-14 budget to continue both the ClimateConnect and Earn Your Stars community grants programs. Round 5 of the ClimateConnect grants program closed on 15 October 2012 and that was open to local government, natural resource management bodies, research institutions and peak bodies and organisations with a limit per grant of \$20 000 each. Eight applications for funding were received. The successful projects were announced on 14 December. Those successful projects are as follows.

Kingborough Council was allocated \$20 000 for a project titled Triggers for Change - Kingborough Climate Change Adaptation Implementation Plan. That is to identify the relevant triggers to adaptation action and utilise recent council community studies in Kingborough to establish a system to benchmark and track climate change adaptation progress and scope out triggers for future adaptive action.

[11.15 a.m.]

Green Cross Australia was allocated \$20 000 for an excellent project, the Witness King Tides project, which has happened once in the south of the state and the week before last in the north of the state. That is about engaging communities in awareness of rising sea levels. It asks individuals to take pictures of the king tide and send them into the Green Cross Australia website. It is happening all around the country and it is a really important engagement strategy with people who live on the coast or love the coast, as we all do, about how the sea levels are rising and are projected to continue to rise into the foreseeable future. That is a really important project.

The North West Environment Centre was granted \$19 800 for its market garden vegetable production for winter and spring to enhance adaptation to climate change by researching varieties of vegetables and techniques to provide options for growers over the winter and spring months.

Then we had the Earn your Stars grants program announced in December with a total of \$58 588 in funding awarded. Whereas the previous ClimateConnect grants focus on adaptation, the focus on Earn your Stars is on reducing your carbon footprint. Sustainable Living Tasmania received \$14 668 for an award-winning program that teaches people how to live more sustainably, reduce their carbon footprint and conserve energy. The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry received \$15 000 for a program focusing on enhancing triple-bottom-line outcomes for the business community. The West Hobart Environment Network received \$18 820 for a community initiative that improves the energy efficiency of West Hobart homes.

## UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

While it is a small grants pool and they are relative small quantities of money distributed, they are highly effective. The evidence shows, particularly in a community as relatively small as Tasmania, that they are highly effective in engaging individuals and communities in the realities of climate change, adjustments to our lifestyle that are necessary and adaptation activities that we can undertake to build that resilience within the community.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I have to agree with you because those smaller groups look after their dollars very carefully.

**Mr FINCH** - Students from around Australia are coming to Launceston on 5 July for a national youth climate gathering. Was there any support from the government given to them?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There was no application made to us.

**CHAIR** - It's not too late.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm sorry, Mrs Rattray, but it is too late for this round.

**Mr FINCH** - That will be an interesting gathering in Launceston.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, and it is good they are coming to Tasmania which, I would argue, is a leader particularly in adaptation activities around the country and we have the lowest emissions profile of any Australian state or territory. I am very glad they are coming here to talk about climate change.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Last year the allocation for the Climate Action Council was about \$150 000. Can you explain to us the role of the council?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The Climate Action Council was established under the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008 and its role is to be a source of expert and community advice to government on how we reach our 2050 legislated emissions reduction target. One of the requirements of the act is that it be reviewed on a regular basis and the first part of the review of the act we undertook early last year was into the role and effectiveness of the Tasmanian Climate Action Council. That review was positive. It came back and said that the council provided high quality advice but there were a number of changes we might make to ensure that the council's advice was effectively targeted and had the broadest possible reach.

We responded to that review because it was time to renew the council anyway and in that process we changed the sitting fees so there are some savings to the Climate Action Council budget as a result of that. The total budget for the climate action council is \$135 000 per annum and we have a really high quality council now that is chaired by Professor Lesley Hughes from the department of biological studies at Macquarie University but is also a member of the National Climate Commission and a highly regarded scientist. On the council is also Jess Feehely, a solicitor from the Environmental Defenders Office and founding member of the Tasmanian Coastal Alliance; from up your way Dr Nick Towle, a medical doctor from the north-west coast with expertise in sustainable health and living; Dr James Risbey, who works in the CSIRO's marine and atmospheric research division; Chris Harries, a renewable energy expert and leader of community-based climate change action in south Hobart particularly; Dr Anna Lyth, an urban sustainability and regional planning expert with the University of Tasmania; Robert Nichols, farmer and renewable energy entrepreneur; Professor Jan McDonald, an environmental lawyer

with the University of Tasmania; and our own Greg Johannes who is the deputy secretary of policy in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thomas Moore was on that last year because I can remember Kate Crowley's assessment of it, so what happened there?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Dr Thomas Moore had agreed to accept a position on the council but he subsequently accepted work with Greens Senator Peter Whish-Wilson. Even though I really wanted him to be able to contribute his expertise towards the work of the council, I personally thought it was inappropriate that a person been employed as a staffer by a political party should be a member of the Climate Action Council, so when Dr Moore moved on, that is when we included Rob Nichols.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Just on that, I have a high regard for Rob Nichols; he is from my area, but was that an advertised position or is it a selection?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It was a selection process and we looked for the broadest possible range of expertise. We wanted this council to be primarily Tasmanian. The previous council had a number of members from interstate because of their particular experience in climate change mitigation and adaptation but the focus for this council was on a Tasmanian-based council. Because we wanted the chair to be someone of unquestionable authority and credibility in this space we approached Professor Lesley Hughes, so there was a collaborative process in terms of determining the make-up of the new council but ultimately I decided.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - You said you saved \$15 000 from last year, was that on sitting fees?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It was on sitting fees; we reduced the sitting fees by around \$2 000 for TCAC members and around \$4 000 for the chair, I think. Members receive just over \$10 000 per annum to sit on the Climate Action Council and the chair receives just over \$20 000 per annum.

I do commended to all members of the committee the blueprint for action which was released by the council a fortnight ago. It is an economic blueprint for Tasmania which focuses on three key areas of renewable energy. The council holds a very strong view that we should be a net exploiter of renewable energy by 2020 and encourage the uptake of renewable energy efficiency in all buildings and built infrastructure. I can advise the committee that in this term of government we will have delivered energy efficiency upgrades to around 9 500 households and small businesses, which is a massive undertaking, and I would argue that per capita probably the strongest energy efficiency push of any Australian state or territory. The third area of focus in the blueprint is around sustainable agriculture, building on the exceptional work that is already happening within our agricultural sector to make sure we reduce emissions from agriculture. According to the latest National Greenhouse Gas Inventory they are slightly trending upwards and that is particularly because there has been renewed economic activity within the agricultural sector in recent years, but there is a whole lot of innovation happening within agriculture that bodes very well for a low-carbon agriculture sector in the future.

**Mr FINCH** - Would the council's work include things like making a submission on the solar feed-in tariffs?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is true that the Climate Action Council made a submission in the first part of the energy reform work earlier this year supporting very strongly net feed-in tariffs and

arguing that a one-to-one tariff should be considered fair and reasonable. The council will also be expressing a similar view to the current process and the government has initiated a public consultation process around the feed-in tariff. That is advice I am sure government will take very seriously given that the Climate Action Council is our key source of expert advice on climate action. Obviously Energy is not my portfolio so it is probably best that I don't talk too much about what might be the outcome of that reform process and what ultimately a fair feed-in tariff might be. I obviously have a view but I am not the government.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I have two questions from the comments you made last year that I think would be important. Just on the council, it appears the high level abilities you have on that council for very little money is guiding quite well where this is going. When you have a look at their credentials for such little impacts, I just put that on the record. I want to know about the interdepartmental steering committee that had \$240 000 allocated to it last year. What progress has there been on what the coastal framework might look like?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I am really glad you asked that question, Mr Gaffney. There was an allocation made in last year's budget to develop a coastal protection and planning framework for Tasmania. Everyone here at the table would be aware that the state coastal policy of 1996 has come under significant criticism over many years for a perceived lack of teeth. It was reviewed a number of times. I remember a couple of coastal policy review processes from before I came into parliament and the last version of the draft coastal policy that came forward was criticised for failing to adequately account for sea level rise and climate change.

A body of work has been undertaken to develop a coastal protection and planning framework with very experienced senior people within the bureaucracy, from DPAC to Justice to the Department of Primary Industries, Water and the Environment, and we are about to take to cabinet a draft protection and planning framework which will then go out for consultation. It contains a number of guiding principles such as the application of the precautionary principle and goals, which are to ensure that we can sustainably use and develop the coast while we are looking after the coastal environment. It recognises there are some areas of our coastline that are highly developed, so you might have a different set of guiding principles - for example, the Hobart waterfront - than you would have for your beautiful stretch of the coastline.

[11.30 a.m.]

I am still considering it; it has not yet gone to cabinet so I do not want to go into too detail about the detail, but it is a very thorough body of work that will provide guidance to councils, planning authorities and individuals around future use, development and protection of the coast. I expect that will go out for consultation in July and it will be a very thorough consultation process. There is a range of stakeholders who have a genuine and legitimate interest in the coast and we want to be able to hear all those stakeholders and make sure we deliver a framework that is embraced by the widest possible collection of stakeholders. Ultimately it is our beautiful coastline and our responsibility, but we need to recognise people will continue to want to live, work and play on the coast so we need a framework that accommodates to the greatest extent possible the broadest range of wishes and views for the coast.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - My last question, and you may not be quite so pleased with this one, but you said the body of work on the carbon value has been completed.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - The forest carbon study?



**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes. Can you come up with a better figure than last year's comment with Dr Macintosh's projection of the potential carbon value within our forest running into billions of dollars over the next two or three decades? Can you narrow that down by a few hundred million? What is the end result of that?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There have been a number of bodies of work undertaken on what the potential carbon value from our forests might be. Dr Andrew Macintosh did one body of work. The forest carbon study came up with a different set of numbers for the potential carbon value from the forests. The value ultimately is determined by whether we are selling those carbon credits into the voluntary market or the mandatory market. Before we get to the point where Tasmania and Tasmanians are reaping an economic benefit from the carbon in our forests, there is a significant body of work that needs to be undertaken around a methodology under the carbon farming initiative.

The forest carbon study was delivered in September last year and then CO2 Australia, the consultants, undertook a feasibility study to determine whether particularly forests that were reserved under the Tasmanian Forests Act would be eligible for carbon credits on the global market, whether they be voluntary or mandatory. The study determined that there is a potential real future here for Tasmania in carbon projects within those reserved forests, so for at least two years now we have been working with the commonwealth around how we make sure any carbon project in a TFA-reserved forest is regarded as additional for the purposes of the CFI act. I can confirm to the committee that the commonwealth has regulated to ensure those forests will be regarded as additional.

The next body of work we have to do is pure mathematics in a way, developing a methodology for crediting the carbon within our forests, then we develop a project. Then there is the whole exercise of marketing Tasmanian forest carbon, which I would have thought was a premium product on global carbon markets, but as we all know global carbon markets are in a state of flux. There have been significant price falls in the European carbon market. My view is, and it is not a hugely informed view, that carbon markets will continue to wax and wane but ultimately there is growth in carbon markets because we are moving towards a low-carbon economic future for the whole planet. We will see carbon prices over time increase and restore. Part of the issue with the European emissions trading scheme was the carbon price there was the impact of the global financial crisis on the whole framework.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I suppose that highlights the sensitivity in the global market. I would hesitate to put any value of any dollar figure on that market because it is in such flux and it could change from here to there, so it is a really hard projection to make from anybody's point of view because of that. Some people don't even believe it will ever get off the ground as a market base or an economic base.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I am not one of those people. China is moving towards an emissions trading scheme. It has a number of regional trial ETSs in place. There are a number of other Asian nations, from memory, South Korea is another one of them. There is movement globally towards emissions trading. Ultimately it is the collective responsibility of all of us as people and human beings and inhabitants of this beautiful planet to make sure that we are keeping what carbon there is currently in the ground, and restoring more carbon into the landscape because the latest science tells us that we are at 440 parts per million of carbon in the atmosphere and we are on a trajectory of more than 2 degrees of warming by the turn of the century. While it can be really discouraging at times to look at the global political carbon framework, there is a whole lot

of excellent work happening on the ground in terms of mitigation. China is an excellent example. They are shutting down inefficient old coal-fired power stations. Their investment in renewable energy is on a rapid upward trajectory. There are growing markets for renewable energy products. There are solar products in Australia. The cost of solar has fallen by about a third in the past year. It is a very fluid area of policy and politics and I am hesitant to put a number on what the carbon in our forests might be worth, but simply from a global perspective retaining the carbon in the forests has an inestimable value. My belief is that Tasmania will be able to reap a dollar carbon benefit from the carbon in its forests and we are certainly doing a lot of work to make sure that we do.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you.

**Mr FINCH** - According to your website, minister, the Tasmanian Wedges report shows almost one-third of Tasmania's carbon emissions come from a relatively small number of big businesses. Is there a list of those businesses and does your office work with those companies to understand the actions they might be taking and their understanding of how they might ameliorate their issues of carbon emissions?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, we do. Thank you for the question, Mr Finch. It is true the Wedges report identified where the emissions are coming from within our economy and the potential for emissions reduction. It is no secret that a significant part of our emissions come from the five major industrials, which we have been working with over a number of years now. I have been out to talk to Rio Tinto and Nyrstar, Norske Skog and our cement works in the north of the state, but I would add that for business purposes, as much as anything else, these large industrials have over a number of years been working to reduce their energy use and costs.

But the findings of the Wedges report were reviewed as part of the second part of the review of the Climate Change Act, which was undertaken by Sinclair Knight Merz and it reassessed the Wedges report and in terms of a comparison of Wedges' reference cases. The original reference from the 2008 Wedges - and I am happy to table this table - I will pass it over to you now, Mr Finch, and feel free to share it.

The blue line is the business as usual trajectory, the red line, which is snaking through the middle of the blue line and the base line, is the revised reference emissions projections. So you can see that our emissions are coming down and the flat line is our target, which is that by 2050 we should be emitting no more than 4.6 mega tons.

I do have some information, and this is the most up to date information, which was released in mid-April, from the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory on Tasmania's emissions and it looks at a number of areas of our economy. We know that when you compare what our emissions were in 1990, which is the base line now established by regulation in Tasmania - and where we are not quite now because the National Greenhouse Gas Inventory runs about two years behind - that our emissions from then have come down by about 34 per cent. That is attributable in significant part to the reforestation of lands that were cleared before 1990 and changes to international accounting methods.

In terms of some specific areas of the economy we are seeing some changes. The Tasmanian economy has become less emissions-intensive over time. The energy sector contributed 53 per cent of Tasmania's net greenhouse gas emissions in 2010-11 but these emissions fluctuate significantly over time and that is made up of energy industries, manufacturing industries and

construction, transport, future emissions, other sectors. From 2008-09 to 2010-11 emissions from manufacturing industries and construction declined by approximately 20 per cent and my advice is that the contributing factors include a decline in black coal consumption for industrial purposes and that may be associated with the conversion from coal to gas energy sources, even after the global financial crisis.

What we do know, unfortunately, is that emissions from transport in Tasmania have been steadily increasing since 1989-90, although emissions from petrol consumption declined in 2010-11, which continues the trend of recent years. This decline, unfortunately, was more than offset by an increase in the consumption of diesel in road transport. As a result emissions from transport increased by just over 5 per cent during 2010-11.

The agricultural sector is interesting. The major emission source that is relevant for the agricultural sector is enteric fermentation. If you want to go into detail about what that is, I am reasonably happy to, but I think we can all guess. Between 2006-07 and 2007-08 there was a decrease in cattle and sheep numbers and areas planted to crops primarily due to the dry conditions, but we have seen an improvement in returns and conditions post-drought that would result in increased emissions levels within that sector, which I must say is doing some really excellent work to bring down its own emissions.

As part of the consultation on the low-carbon issues paper we are working with the agricultural sector. It was not a round table but it was a forum with the agricultural sector about opportunities to reduce energy consumption and emissions.

[11.45 a.m.]

A number of factors that have contributed towards an increase in agricultural emissions of 2.7 per cent between 2009-10 to 2010-11. But from the baseline year, 1989-90, to 2010-11, emissions from the agricultural sector fell by almost 10.5 per cent. There are more efficient practices and sustainable practices happening within our agricultural sectors.

There is some good news and there is some challenging news about how we lower our emissions. There is some good news in the waste sector, which contributed 4.2 per cent of the state's net emissions in 2010-11. But between the baseline year and 2010-11, emissions from this sector dropped by 22.3 per cent and even fell by 1.3 per cent in the most recent reported years and that has something to do with making sure that we are capturing energy from waste, reducing, and recycling. These things that we talk about have a tangible impact on our emissions in Tasmania because people are changing the way they live and councils are changing the way they deal with waste. There is some good news in our mitigation strategy.

**Dr GOODWIN** - Minister, last year we had a bit of a discussion around New South Wales and the fact that they are the only jurisdiction to provide an indemnity to local government and I think you mentioned that there might have been some work happening on that liability issue at the COAG level. Has that progressed at all since last estimates?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Unfortunately, the Select Council on Climate Change and energy efficiency, which was considering these matters and particularly national adaptation priorities and the question of a liability of indemnity was also on the table, abolished itself towards the end of last year. I do not think it is being too unkind to say, there was a lot of obstruction at the table to adaptation activities and to mitigation under the carbon pricing framework from other jurisdictions. I protested quite strongly that the Select Council abolished itself. But I think the

federal minister, Greg Combet, breathed a huge sigh of relief because it was not an effective council.

That adaptation work is now being undertaken. The federal Climate Change Office is still undertaking that work. But my feeling is that we should not expect any real clarification on this question around a national set of standards any time soon. But if you look at the Southern Tasmanian Councils Association's climate change adaptation strategy, they talk about the liability question and the guidance that is provided there is that if councils, in good faith, making sure that they have available to them the most recent science and projections, make a decision based on that, then they should not be liable for that decision in future years.

The role of the state government in ensuring that councils are not placed in a position where they are making poor or uninformed decisions because they do not have the information is to make sure that councils do have that information at their disposal. That is part of the climate futures work and part of the adaptation planning work we are doing. It is why, in part, we have released a sea level rise planning allowance and the coastal inundation mapping.

The tools are being developed for councils to make sure that when they address a development application that they are doing so with all the information that is necessary is at their disposal to make an informed decision. As we move to formalise and finalise the coastal development framework, the liability issue will be addressed, at least in part. I hold a very firm view that you should not give blanket indemnities to councils, that there needs to be a level of responsibility on both sides and I am not sure if there has been any change to the New South Wales policy on indemnity.

**Ms SPENCER** - No. They were looking to review it and did some repealing.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I want to follow up a couple of issues. Somebody has already raised the feed-in tariff and I think that is a really interesting continuing discussion. As you say, we could be exporting electricity. Obviously the uptake from people in solar panels has been really good and would be better I think -

**CHAIR** - If there were not so much uncertainty.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is a capital investment that people are making on the hope that they will get that money back through not having to pay the tariff. There needs to be some certainty and plenty of overseas countries have given a guarantee of a tariff for a certain number of years.

One of the interesting things for me has been that that seems to me - it is anecdotal I suppose, a personal sort of observation - that it is not just that when people start with solar panels providing their own electricity in a sense that they are producing, it is also that they become much more conscious of what they use. It is efficiency as well because they have never been in a position where they have looked at controlling their electricity as much - when you are producing you think, 'I don't want to be using more than I am producing'. It seems to be making people much more conscious of their energy use.

**CHAIR** - Like water meters, can I suggest?

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Exactly.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is right.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - It is a great educative tool as well and from that point of view it seems to me worth supporting so I am really glad to hear that the council is moving on that. In relation to that you talked about the smart grid. Can you elaborate on that a bit? What is it going to mean for consumers? Is it going to be available to individuals and how?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - There are numerous definitions of a smart grid and it is quite challenging to encapsulate it all within a small grab. Effectively, a smart grid is an overlay over your whole grid that is a twenty-first century information technology overlay. It allows your energy transmission company, for example, to have much more control over peak flows. A lot of the investment in transmission infrastructure, in the past 10 years particularly, has been about accommodating peaks. When the most people are using the most power and energy, companies need to be able to accommodate those peaks. That has been the most significant driver of the increase in power costs to ordinary, everyday customers. If you have a smart grid you are saving on transmission infrastructure investment. You are getting more life out of your grid, basically because you have much control as an energy company.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Over what you are drawing out?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Over the ebbs and flows of energy. There is a transmission infrastructure component to a smart grid but there is also a capacity of the smart grid to reach into an individual's home so that - and this is what you were talking about before in terms of people being empowered to take control over their electricity use, and smart meters are one part of a smart grid where a household can look at their energy consumption, see when they are using the most power. For example, they may wish to not have their electric hot water cylinder chugging away and drawing power all day. There are ways to control within your own household the amount of energy that you consume.

Smart grid technology is being deployed in places like California. The Obama government is investing about \$4 billion in smart grid development. A number of Asian nations are investing in smart grids. The analogy that was put to me not long ago - and I am going to butcher this analogy, but anyway I am going to give it a go - is that it is a bit like once upon a time you had an old Ford car. It had four wheels, a manual engine, and a dial on the speedo that wavered up and down - all the components of a vehicle that got you from A to B. That is the old grid. You have updated your car that has a computer, uses fuel more efficiently and has not been a huge cost upgrade, but it means you have more life for that car. It is a very twenty-first century electricity upgrade.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - At what stage are we up to with that, with consumers being able to have one these gadgets in their houses?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - As part of the energy reform process, the Greens negotiated an investigation into the uptake of smart grid technology in Tasmania and the development of an implementation plan. That draft implementation plan is in an almost final state. It talks very much about consumer empowerment, saving on infrastructure costs, and making sure you have the lowest possible power prices because you are not having to spend so much on infrastructure. That will be going out to public consultation in the coming months. To develop a smart grid in Tasmania is at least a decade-long project. It is a significant life-prolonging upgrade for the grid and it will be a staged process in developing the smart grid. You may, for example, start with

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your major industrials. It could be some time before the smart grid reaches into individual homes and, if the decision is made to go down the smart metering path, it may well be a number of years before households have a smart meter. It is an investment in the grid that is absolutely essential.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Is there not a smart-metering-type measuring device available? You see it on television - in other countries obviously - where people have a red or green to say you are using more than you would be wanting to use.

**CHAIR** - It is probably an app on a phone somewhere else.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - You can monitor your energy usage. One of the challenges I am having here in this discussion is that I am not the Energy minister, although I sometimes wish I was. I can talk about this from the perspective of lowering our power consumption. The focus has been, as Climate Change minister, on the energy efficiency program. 'Negawatts' instead of megawatts should be our focus. We have done outstanding work across government on energy efficiency. There are 9 500 households from Housing Tasmania households to private rentals and across government agencies lowering our consumption.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - There are plenty more asking for them, minister.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, I know. It is interesting; it is one of the first challenges I had as Minister for Human Services when I raised this with the previous secretary of the department. He said it would be inequitable to do this in a staged process because some people will reap the benefits of an energy efficiency upgrade and others will not. My argument was you have to start somewhere. Those tenants who received the upgrades are saving on average \$300 a year on their household power bills and their houses are warmer and healthier. I have spoken to one mum whose son's asthma significantly improved as a result of Sustainable Living Tasmania coming in and refurbishing the house with simple energy-efficiency devices.

[12.00 p.m.]

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Yes. I suppose I think that there is growing demand - desire - is probably the word for people to be able to manage their own power use more. I understand what you are saying that it is not your portfolio, but I am not quite sure how or where to pursue that.

**Ms SPENCER** - Under the former program called the National Solar Schools Program, that no longer runs, schools were able to apply for funds to do renewable energy upgrades and installation of smart meters. I know that MacKillop College was one that has used smart meters in their school as part of their education program. We could provide you with some information on schools that received those fundings because a lot of the schools are including smart meters as part of those grant applications.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - Are there smart meters available for households, do you know? It is definitely a responsibility of Climate Change.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - It is probably more at the moment an Aurora responsibility, really.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - To encourage it is part of your portfolio.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - We are always encouraging smart energy use, Mrs Taylor.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I would just like to know more.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I agree with what you are saying about households wanting to take control of their energy consumption. There is a body work that has happened since the Tasmanian Wedges report. The focus on energy efficiency in this term of government has embedded energy efficiency as a philosophy within government agencies in a very positive way. It is now part of Housing Tasmania's standard operating procedure. We dedicate a portion of our maintenance funds and when we go in and do any works, we do energy efficiency at the same time. We gained the extra money in last year's budget and this year's budget to continue to that rollout. I would dearly love our tenants to have an upgrade as soon as possible, but it has to be a staged process because we don't have the resources.

**Mrs TAYLOR** - I think the member for Windermere has raised this in our House as well, but we all have numbers of housing questions.

**CHAIR** - We might get there this afternoon and talk about it.

**Mr FINCH** - As we continue to move towards a low carbon economy there are some controversies - solar feed-in tariffs we have talked about this morning, but there are also wind farms. Do you have a comment on that or is that part of the thinking of your department?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, renewable energy is certainly a focus of our department and we are seeing growing increased investments in wind farms in Tasmania. I think Musselroe Wind Farm is just about ready to press 'go'. We have a project proposed for King Island. There will always be a range of views on wind farms, particularly if you happen to be living near one that is proposed. I understand the concern of some King Island residents around the proposal to put 200 turbines on King Island. On the other hand, I also understand the concern of climate scientists to make sure that we are re-engineering our energy supply sources. The King Island wind farm, for example, would be feeding our cleanest-wind-in-the-world power to Victoria. Wind farms are one part of your mix. In an increasingly warming climate they are a really important part of your mix. There will continue to be an investment in wind farms on the mainland and here in Tasmania.

One of the concerns that I have always had about wind farms is their impact on threatened species - particularly on birds of prey. I know that, for example, up at Woolnorth they have a very active eagle monitoring program up there. But there are still wedge-tailed eagles and white-bellied sea eagles that are being sliced up by the wind turbines. These are the challenges that we have to confront as we move towards more renewable energy. I do not have any easy answers on this but I am certainly a big fan of wind farms.

**Mr DEAN** - I have one other question on wind farms that has been raised with me a number of times. What protection there is for birdlife around these wind farms, like the swift parrot? Is there anything done to protect them?

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That is probably more a question for the Minister for Environment. I have been to Woolnorth and I recommend a visit; it is a great site. They have spotters at the wind farm so if they see an eagle in the facility they can shut down the turbines. They are very wary during eagle courtship, mating and breeding periods and are continually monitoring their eagle populations in the area. These animals come under the Tasmanian Threatened Species Act and the federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, so they are definitely a

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protected species. The technology around wind farms, as I understand it, is getting better and better.

**Mr DEAN** - This came up in New Zealand with all their wind farms as well, the tragedy with birdlife.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - If you talk to someone like Nick Mooney, our raptor expert, he thinks there are more strikes from wind farms than those that are officially recorded because birds disappear to die. He says there are new wind farm propeller technologies that have been developed in order to lessen the impact on birdlife.

**The committee suspended from 12.08 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.**