



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Kerry Vincent MLC

Thursday 4 June 2026

MEMBERS

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)

Hon Clare Glade-Wright MLC

Hon Sarah Lovell MLC

Hon Cassy O'Connor MLC

Hon Bec Thomas MLC

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. KERRY VINCENT MLC

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Housing and Planning.

Infrastructure and Transport portfolio

Tim Lovibond

Chief of Staff

Shane Gregory

A/Secretary, Transport, Department of State Growth

Cynthia Heydon

Deputy Secretary, Transport, Department of State Growth

(Can be called)

Ben Moloney

Executive Director, Major Transport Projects, Department of State Growth

Lia Morris

Chief Executive Officer, Marine and Safety Tasmania

Ministerial Staff

Anthony Reid

Director Construction and Housing

Richard Wilson

Senior Adviser

Todd Newett

Senior Adviser

Housing and Planning portfolio

Anthony Reid

Director Construction and Housing

Shane Gregory

A/Secretary, Department of State Growth

Ben Wilson

Chief Executive Officer, Homes Tasmania

(Can be called)

Sean McPhail

A/Director, State Planning Office, Department of State Growth

Richard Gilmour

Director Community Infrastructure, Homes Tasmania

Jessemy Stone

Director Housing Policy and Programs, Homes Tasmania

Scott French

Principal Business Analyst, Homes Tasmania

Ministerial Staff

Tim Lovibond

Chief of Staff

Victoria Matterson

Senior Adviser

Adele Fenwick

Senior Adviser

Minister for Local Government

Tim Lovibond

Chief of Staff

Mathew Healey

Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Luke Gregory

A/Executive Director, Office of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Ministerial Staff

Ellie Piesse

Adviser

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Infrastructure and Transport Services

The committee met at 9.00 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - Welcome minister. Thanks for appearing for the Estimates Committee. I invite you to introduce the members of your team at the table and make some opening comments about the portfolio. No, we can go straight to questions? That's fine.

Mr VINCENT - On my right, my chief of staff, Tim Lovibond; to his right is the acting secretary of State Growth, Shane Gregory; on the left is the deputy secretary, Transport, DSG and a heap of different things in Transport, Cynthia Heydon; further along, Ben Moloney, executive director, Major Projects, DSG, and general manager of a whole heap of things that I can't even start to pronounce as well.

CHAIR - We have a new member on our side of the table for those who may not have met Clare Glade-Wright, member for Huon; you all know the rest of us. We'll go straight to questions if that's all right? We're starting off with Infrastructure and Transport and work through our output groups there.

Output Group 2 - Infrastructure and Transport Services

2.1 Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery

CHAIR - Minister, before we launch into that, can I ask you, did your chief of staff receive an email from our committee secretary regarding the use of strong fragrances?

Mr VINCENT - No.

CHAIR - The committee secretary didn't get it.

Mr VINCENT - I'm sorry, the chief of staff didn't.

CHAIR - No, the chief of staff.

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

CHAIR - So, he didn't share it with anyone, obviously?

Mr VINCENT - No.

CHAIR - Is everyone aware of that in your team? How did they find out about it?

Mr VINCENT - It's only discussions between you and me that we've had about it, which was Friday last week after I returned from an illness.

Ms LOVELL - Perhaps we should clarify then: have people been made aware not to wear -

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

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CHAIR - We did have a little incident in the Chamber yesterday; we don't know where the fragrance was coming from, but it was quite overpowering for many, not just on this side of the table, the other side as well.

Minister, if we could go to some of the machinery-of-government changes that affect the broader portfolio - this is a bit overarching, not just infrastructure strategy and delivery? Can you speak to the committee a bit about how you see this progressing - timelines and what will actually mean, in terms of scrutiny of current functions in State Growth as opposed to tracking it through to Building Tasmania.

Mr VINCENT - I'll give a general overview, Chair, and then I will hand to the acting secretary who has been involved with the machinery of government. Obviously, it was something that I've been involved with for some time about the restructure of how we dealt with infrastructure projects, which then grew to something a lot more inclusive as we went through and looked at different things. Since the announcement, I don't have a full involvement until Building Tasmania is formed on 2 July. There are a lot of other steps in the process along that way which I will get Shane to talk about in a moment.

Basically, the construction arm of Building Tasmania will have a home section, a civil section and a construction section, which is in line with a lot of the areas of concentration of expertise now. It will allow for a movement of duties depending on what projects need to be concentrated on at the time and the upskilling of a lot of different people into different areas and a sensible way of [inaudible] scoping, costing, and all the way through the projects.

The wraparound services of Homes Tas will come into its own section of concentration to do with all the services that Homes Tas does separately to the building of homes.

CHAIR - Where will the services side of it sit?

Mr VINCENT - That'll sit in a separate column, if you like -

CHAIR - Under Building Tasmania still?

Mr VINCENT - Under Building Tasmania. Then, there'll be a part with all your strategic planning and all the back-office side to do with Building Tasmania, then Transport will come across as it really is with all the regulatory and statutory services and sits alone under Building Tas as well.

CHAIR - How will it - and this may still be being worked through but, one of the biggest challenges for us as members of parliament scrutinising the Budget is following the money. We've seen this happen in the past. Back in the day, there was - I don't want to give you a history lesson but, the department of Health and Human Services were together - then they were pulled apart. Then we had Communities Tas and that was then disbanded, so it becomes impossible to follow the money and to see what's actually going on. So, do you have any idea at this stage what sort of line items we'll be looking at under Building Tasmania?

Mr VINCENT - I'll get Shane to explain that a little bit more, but it's also awkward for us, working through that. We're lucky that with Infrastructure we do have a block of forward Estimates funds, which is probably the tidiest way for me to think about an annual block of money. The finetuning through the budget process is what Shane has been working on, to try

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to pull apart DSG and reconstitute it under Building Tas, along with the services and everything. It's probably best to get Shane to talk to that a little bit more because he's been involved with restructure and everything else there as well, but it is an awkward 12-month period.

CHAIR - Perhaps when the acting secretary speaks about this, he could also tell us - you say you've got a block of funding in Infrastructure, what that is actually for. Is some of that being sent off to other parts or is that this block that sits with you? I just want to try to get an understanding of where the money is now, where we're going to see it in the future, to be able to compare like with like.

Mr VINCENT - There's a couple of things there that I'll just draw to attention, which are the obvious ones especially, Infrastructure probably sits there fairly well as a block already. It's when you start to look at different schools or police, fire and emergency, or Health, some of those projects still come under the Health minister, for instance, but need to be delivered under Building Tas, which does a certain part of the project. I will hand to the acting secretary to explain that in more detail, please.

Mr GREGORY - Thank you, minister, and through you, just to recap a little bit about how we see the structure of Building Tasmania coming together. Within State Growth at the moment, we've got the Transport group and that encompasses -

CHAIR - Transport did you say?

Mr GREGORY - the Transport group, and that sits under Ms Heydon. That includes road-user services and passenger transport and the road management component. That will remain as Transport services minus the actual delivery of projects - the construction component will be drawn out into a construction group.

Then Homes Tasmania will come in and that will form a Housing services group minus the construction component, which will go off into the construction group. Then there will be an Infrastructure strategy and planning group. Now, the construction services group will be, effectively, a delivery agency for the Transport services group, Housing services group, and all other agencies. It will be about consolidating expertise in delivery and doing those things as efficiently as we can. But, they are a delivery agent for the portfolio agencies.

So, the budgets for, say, hospitals, schools, ambulance stations, won't, as we believe at the moment, won't come into Building Tasmania. The portfolio agency will retain the budget for their infrastructure investment and Building Tasmania will be the delivery agent for that. You would expect to see, probably, very similar line items appearing in the budget papers as you currently do. Certainly, within Building Tasmania we would expect that within Transport and within Housing, you would see the same sort of budget lines that that you currently see. There's a bit of work we need to do with Treasury. We're looking to implement a model, Mr Moloney's had a good look around the country to see who's running similar models. The model we're looking to implement is based on South Australia, and in that jurisdiction, the portfolio agency retains ownership of the project, and the delivery agency is delivering it.

CHAIR - So, we'll still see, like, capital investment in Education, say building of a new school, or a new hospital in Health, or something.

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Mr GREGORY -Correct.

CHAIR - That will sit as a capital investment program in their budget papers?

Mr GREGORY - Correct.

CHAIR - How do we account for the cost of the bit that you guys are doing, or Mr Moloney's doing, whoever's doing it?

Mr GREGORY - This is something we actually need to work through with Treasury with regard to the FMA and Treasurer's Instructions. But the South Australian model works on the basis that, effectively, their delivery agency is a project management group and they get paid based on milestones from the portfolio agency. So, there's an agreed structure of cost to run the project and, as the project runs through and payments are made out to contractors, there are milestone payments that come in from the portfolio agency. That's in a nutshell.

CHAIR - The budget sits with the portfolio agency still?

Mr GREGORY - Correct. Yeah, it sits with them, it's their project, it's their role to determine what projects they need and put up the business cases for that. It's the delivery component that comes into Building Tasmania.

CHAIR - So, those building projects can't commence until the work's been done by this construction group or whoever, or am I misunderstanding that?

Mr GREGORY - Okay. So the way a project would work is that all of the asset-management functions sit back with - let's use Health as an example. So, all the asset-management functions, the maintaining of all the assets, would remain with Health and all the asset-planning functions would remain with Health. They would be looking at the levels of service that they need to provide in terms of Health, where those services are needed, what scale they need in terms of -

CHAIR - They have input into the design, et cetera?

Mr GREGORY - They do. So they would do the initial piece of work that says we need a new maternity ward at, you know, Campbell Town Hospital. So, they would do that piece of work. They would put their business case through; that would be approved. We would be providing support to them in terms of the pricing of the business case and how that comes together. When that goes through the process and the budget is allocated, there will be a point when that gets handed over to the delivery agency that runs the process of finalising the design and doing all the approvals and running the tenders and getting the project delivered. We would be maintaining a very strong connection between the portfolio agency as the sponsor and the owner of the project, and the delivery team.

CHAIR - If things all go pear-shaped - like a thing I won't mention just yet - who's responsible?

Mr VINCENT - The minister - in Health, using that example, hypothetical - is still the responsible person, but obviously on the building -

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CHAIR - So, the minister for Health in this case?

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

CHAIR - So, if the budget blows out, things go pear shaped, the minister - in this case, the minister for Health - will be the responsible person that would need to respond to that?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. I can say one of the big parts, from where I sit in amongst all this, is that initial part of the work of when they come up with a thought bubble on what they need to have, and then where Building Tas would be involved is very much in making sure that the project is scoped.

CHAIR - Is needed in the first place, perhaps?

Mr VINCENT - Well, no. That would be part of, I should imagine, Cabinet and the Health department working through that; but when we come in, it's strictly on the building side of things to make sure everything from the geotech all the way through till we get to a point where we can end up with a higher P factor, in putting forward more accurate figures than what has probably been done in the past.

Ms THOMAS - How is this not just creating another level of bureaucracy? I thought the idea here was about efficiencies and streamlining processes. It sounds like we're adding another step in the process; how is it not just further complicating things?

Mr VINCENT - I understand what you're saying. Taking the messy step out of some of the departments that do not have the expertise or the complete knowledge on that. Yes, they have the passion for what they need in a project, but then it starts to get very untidy with jumping around between departments or anything like this. So, this brings the skills of the people we need to be able to make sure that all parts of the project have gone through together. It also helps us with the assurance programs, through the project itself as well, in one area, so it's not being run by four or five different areas of the government. It puts it into one area of the government; but, at the end of the day, it's still hypothetical, a part of a hospital project, so it still comes back to the minister, but it's all done in Building Tas.

Ms THOMAS - What about projects of GBEs?

Mr VINCENT - GBEs: that is just part of the thought on what needs to happen going forward; not at this stage because GBEs sit under a different sort of mechanism. I think I'm correct in what I'm saying there.

Mr GREGORY - That's correct, minister, and through you, minister, I might add in terms of some additional information with regard to your question about how does this improve things: any project, regardless of what it is or where it is, goes through a series of phases. So, there's an identification phase, which you identify the need for the project, the basics of it. Then you go through a scoping phase, which says, well, here's what it has to look like. Then there's the design phase and delivery phase, in a broad sense. Now, terminology is used differently in different places, but that's largely it.

Regardless of how things are delivered, all of those things need to work, and they need to go through gates to make sure that they can move from one phase to the next. The

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government has already put in place project assurance to be getting greater assurance about the movement between those phases; but I think the key thing we're going to see is that, at the moment, how those different phases are undertaken varies widely across government. Some agencies do it very well; other agencies not so well. It's a model and a process that's been very well developed within the transport space over many, many decades. There are other agencies, and I've worked across a couple now, that it's not as good and not done as well, and part of that is some agencies don't do a lot of infrastructure, so they don't have a lot of critical mass in their groups to do that.

So, what this will do is bring all of that together, put some more discipline around those processes. It's not adding more things in; it's actually making sure that things that should be there already are being done well, and by bringing together a critical mass of staff and expertise, and standardising systems, we will be able to achieve things running much smoother. Projects generally go pear-shaped because the early phases aren't done well. If you get the early phases done well, projects generally run well; but that's a rule of thumb. If you want to rush the beginning and not do that well, it will actually catch you out later on, and, if you look at projects that don't work, have cost blowouts or delays, typically you will find that that bit hasn't - the problem starts right at the beginning.

CHAIR - TT-Line being a classic example of that.

Mr VINCENT - I might just add to that, in line with Ms Thomas's question of GBEs, we have already some assurance programs in place for the GBEs, as in TT-Line, TasPorts and others that I'm not involved with, that report back to present committees on some of that program. So, that is driving a more uniform approach to all heavy capital expenditure the government is involved with.

CHAIR - Can I just ask, and I will come to Cassy: is there a threshold for which the projects are pulled in, if you like?

Mr GREGORY - Yes. Through you, minister, we're just working through that at the moment. South Australia works on the threshold of about \$1 million, I think, Ben?

Mr MOLONEY - It varies. So, for instance, agencies can become accredited to deliver projects that are up to \$4 million, but typically their process applies from basically above minor works. So, their minor works 10 years ago was \$175,000; I don't know if that's been updated, but that was the number that was in the policy that was developed at that time. They have in place, for instance, a series of, sort of, panel contracts that enable delivery - lead agencies to deliver works, up to the \$1 million that Shane mentioned, fairly efficiently; and then for accredited agencies, so that's agencies that have demonstrated capability of delivering projects, they have the ability to deliver up to \$4 million. But, typically everything above that would be delivered by a building projects group in the South Australian model.

CHAIR - Have you got evidence that it works in South Australia, because they had a big hospital, this might have been before this was put in, I don't know, that went completely over budget, like massively.

Mr MOLONEY - My understanding is that project wasn't delivered by that particular group. There was a PPP. It was a very different model of approach to that project, and it was a

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very challenging project. I guess South Australia's model has been in place from about 2005, so it has matured over that time.

CHAIR - If that - the hospital didn't go through it then, clearly.

Mr MOLONEY - My understanding is that it didn't get delivered by that particular group, given its unique approach, but yes, that was a very challenging, but -

CHAIR - But where's your evidence that it works in South Australia?

Mr MOLONEY - The primary evidence is that it's been in place and operating since about 2005. As I said, the most recent policy that they're working to was updated around 2016. At this stage, we've been liaising with our counterparts within their building projects area to understand how it operates. Our intention is that, if we do, through consultation with the other agencies within government, we confirm that this is the approach that would be likely to be adopted. We can do further looking into what are the pros and cons, but at this stage, we're still just determining some of the questions that you're asking, so that we're - as in the answers to some of the questions that you're asking, so that we can -

CHAIR - Well, we would need that, before we deal with any legislation related to this, I'd suggest, minister.

Mr VINCENT - Some of the projects, for instance, it's awkward to put just a dollar amount on it, because the Education department has had a program that they've needed to do that isn't that big for each school, but when you take the number of schools around the state, it does end up being a sizeable project. So, the simplicity and the cost saving that has already been talked about, without this being formed up yet, has been that there would have been substantial savings by consolidating that as a statewide view, or how it was done, even though you would probably use multiple contractors around the state, but that project, brought all together from all the schools, would have been big enough to justify -

CHAIR - That's been a criticism in schools, just redesigning everything.

Mr VINCENT - an overview of commonsense.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, the issue of threshold is an interesting one. There'll be a dollar value but there will also be considerations around the capacity of an agency to deliver things, as Ben has talked about -

CHAIR - A track record, perhaps.

Mr GREGORY - Well, perhaps track record, but also, coming back to Ms Thomas's question around how we're not duplicating. In making this transition, we'll also need to look at other agencies and understand how they currently do work. For example, Health, again, has a project delivery team and it has an asset management team. In the asset management team, they have building and facilities teams who do a lot of work within the hospitals of a small nature. They run air-conditioning upgrades and those sorts of things, so they're quite capable of doing that without having to retain a project delivery group.

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That's one of the things we would look at in terms of thresholds that, in setting this up, if an agency then has to still retain a project delivery group that hasn't really achieved what we're trying to do. We are talking to all of our agencies at the moment to understand how they are structured, how they run things at different levels and then we will mould the actual framework from South Australia to suit us here in Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, where does Macquarie Point urban renewal and the proposed stadium fit within the future Building Tasmania framework?

Mr VINCENT - At this point in time it's purely with the minister as totally separate to Building Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the state's history won't sit under the newly created Building Tasmania, which is to oversee infrastructure projects?

Mr VINCENT - I take that's correct, still? I'm just checking there are no other discussions.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, yes, that's correct. The other point we would make is, it is going to take us some time to transition projects in and we have to get Building Tasmania set up, then start to progressively transition projects in. At the moment we aren't contemplating projects from GBEs and SOCs.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, well, if we can just -

CHAIR - They're not a GBE or a SOC, they're -

Mr GREGORY - Well, that's - we're not contemplating that at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Right. If we go back to the original premise that Building Tasmania will examine the capacity of different agencies, let's say different entities of government, to deliver on infrastructure, MPDC has no history, no track record of delivering on infrastructure. Has there been any discussion in government about Building Tasmania having some oversight of that infrastructure build?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, there are things already in place regarding the Macquarie Point stadium. It has already been subject to some gate processes through the assurance process; that will continue to be the case.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, by State Growth?

Mr VINCENT - The assurance program - by State Growth.

Mr GREGORY - By State Growth, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, would those elements of the stadium build remain within Building Tasmania or will Building Tasmania just step back and leave it all to MPDC?

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Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, the build is being undertaken by MPDC. There is already a new project assurance process that's been in place for a couple of years now within DSG. That project assurance process will continue. It will probably work, I think, a bit tighter with other agency projects coming in, but it's being applied to Mac Point now, so there are a number of gates in a project. A project has to pass each of those gates. The assurance review is done by an independent panel. There have been a couple of those on Mac Point. That process will continue. There's also some other governance in place in addition to Mac Point Development Corporation's own internal steering committees and project governance processes. There's also an oversight committee chaired by the secretary of DPAC, which brings together representatives from various agencies to oversee that. There are a range of governance things in place at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Minister, what parts of the stadium order come within your areas of ministerial responsibility?

Mr VINCENT - The original order certainly did under planning. There are other bits to that now - I'm not sure what's changed now that the original order has been done.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, the order comes under the minister for Planning.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, all elements of the order and all responsibility for provisions on the order, conditions, are not in any way with the minister for Transport and Infrastructure and Planning.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, the administration of the order is through the minister for Planning.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. As we know, minister, there are multiple elements of the proposed stadium or redevelopment project that do fall within your areas of responsibility - even though they might not be in the order - that is the pedestrian safety upgrades along Davey and Evans streets, presumably some of the works along Evans Street to the wharf, definitely the rapid buses that will be part of the project. Maybe you could just give us a quick update on at least those two elements and, of course, let's not forget the northern access road. The pedestrian safety upgrades, which weren't funded in last year's Budget, I can't see any sign of the funding for them in this year's, but if you want to disabuse me of that notion that would be great. Is that still on track as part of the project?

Mr VINCENT - It certainly is with consultation with - Macquarie Point needs to put forward a plan on how they see a lot of that interaction with the surrounding area working, and I will ask the deputy secretary to clarify some of that point. The northern access road certainly sits with Mr Moloney as a DSG project at present, and over the next 12 months more of that information will come to fruition on how they see the movement of people in and out of the stadium finalised. I do believe that was either part of the order that they had to have a plan in the next 12 months or something similar to that? Are you across that?

Ms O'CONNOR - Also, can I just check, will the funding for these elements of the project be administered by you as minister? Where would that sit? Pedestrian safety upgrades, new buses -

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CHAIR - Around the site you mean, Cassy?

Ms O'CONNOR - Works around the site, that's right, thanks Chair.

Mr VINCENT - Outside of the immediate site, the immediate site would be done by Macquarie Point, outside of that would either be done by council or by DSG, depending.

Ms O'CONNOR - And those parts that would be the responsibility of DSG would be the rapid bus network, pedestrian safety in terms of funding. Is that correct?

Mr VINCENT - And walkways.

Ms O'CONNOR - And works?

Mr VINCENT - And works. Some would come under council, I should imagine, but -

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, and the northern access road will be entirely your responsibility as minister and funded. And what's the latest cost estimate on the northern access road because I'm sure it's not what it was when we sat here at the table last year?

Mr VINCENT - \$76.3 million?

Ms O'CONNOR - That was the same.

Mr MOLONEY - Through the minister, \$78.9 million is the budget allocation and the most recent cost estimate that we've received is within that budget.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. All right, so update on the pedestrian safety works?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, we're working with Stadiums Tas and Macquarie Point Corporation on their planning activities for their expected, let's say, start and finishes of events. We haven't got clarity of exactly what sort of infrastructure is required, but part of that will be the engagement with them and also with council, so we're able to identify our requirements in events for both the road traffic movements as well as people movements, as well as with council as a road authority.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Thanks, Chair, for your indulgence briefly, just to get the bottom of some of this. So, the Greater Hobart Rapid Bus Network business case says that the network will provide a transport solution for the stadium, but the northern corridor won't be finished until 2032. Is that correct?

Mr VINCENT - Based around what we've put forward to Infrastructure Australia for funding, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Southern corridor complete in about 2034 and games at the stadium expected to begin in 2031. What's the short-term planning on how this gap would be bridged in the intervening year and have you got any of the new buses that have been promised?

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Mr VINCENT - New buses, no, at this stage. Macquarie Point is still working through the movement. They have their percentages and numbers that they think they have to move by buses, but that is part of what DSG is doing with Macquarie Point at present.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, the calculations of the patronage and the expected, let's say, different modes of carrying people to and from the stadium - I understand it was a 3 per cent assumption for rapid bus with the bulk being event buses. Macquarie Point and Stadiums Tasmania have work to do in relation to what the event bus plan looks like. We're working with them as part of the project for the bus plaza, but also what can be done to assist with the broader public transport network, as well, and how that could, sort of, all be working together with the event buses, with the future rapid bus, with existing passenger transport.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you. Just finally: will the pedestrian upgrades be funded, because, last year when we had this conversation with minister Abetz, there was a real question mark over whether the ministry thought they were necessary, let alone funded?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, my understanding is the pedestrian needs and scope haven't been defined as yet.

Ms O'CONNOR - So it's not - there's no allocation in the Budget for it over the forward Estimates?

Mr VINCENT - Not that I'm aware of, no.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Chair, for now.

CHAIR - Just want to pick up on Cassy's point, there. That's a very significant project for the state. When I look at the output group description here, 2.1 Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery, which I think is staying, effectively, from what you said, minister, yes?

Mr VINCENT - As far as I know.

CHAIR - It says:

Planning and delivering high profile, high risk and or major projects across various government portfolios as allocated by the government.

So, this is under minister Abetz's portfolio. It's not like it's off in a GBE, where, you know, you've got shareholder ministers, but you've got a board and, you know, a management team delivering various things. So why isn't it pulled in, because, if you look at this, you know, I go to Cassy's point this is one of the most significant high-profile, high-risk projects going?

Mr VINCENT - I think it's, as the dep sec said, they're still working through some of those finer details on that; that will be taken into account as it's developed.

CHAIR - With all due respect to the people who are in roles with the Macquarie Point board, you know, senior management, they haven't delivered a project like this, you know.

Ms O'CONNOR - They haven't delivered any projects, really.

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CHAIR - But then we've seen the debacle with the delivery of Berth 3 in Devonport, and they're a ferry company. They probably should never have been doing it in the first place. We're not going to go through that any further but that just shows where you've got people whose core business is not delivering big, critical, high-risk infrastructure delivering big, high-risk, critical infrastructure -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's not critical.

CHAIR - surely we need people with big, critical, high-risk infrastructure experience there?

Mr VINCENT - That is certainly not my ministry, but I am aware that they are going through, making sure they have the expertise on their - either board, or employed at Macquarie Point to work through those different matters.

CHAIR - But why wouldn't they - because they're funded entirely by the taxpayer, entirely by the taxpayer, why wouldn't we, rather than going out and getting your whole new group of people, use the expertise that you say are being brought into this new Building Tasmania to deliver high-risk, important, high-profile infrastructure in the state, rather than go off on a frolic and employ all these other people themselves at our expense?

Mr VINCENT - It's not a frolic at this stage, but Building Tas isn't in formation yet -

CHAIR - No, Building Tas is not the frolic; I'm talking about frolic that could be happening over at Macquarie Point.

Mr VINCENT - That will be a question for the minister responsible for that, but I know they are making sure they've got the expertise there -

CHAIR - But why do they need to do that if you're building this expertise in this portfolio, Building Tasmania? Why would we then pay another bucket of money to Macquarie Point? It won't be on the budget of the stadium, rest assured. It will be with Macquarie Point, and we've seen their budget line increase. We've seen their borrowings required that we need to fund. You know, I just find it extraordinary that we're allowing them to set up their whole new, you know, department, if you like, or expertise employed there, rather than use what you're setting up here, which is the purpose of it.

Mr VINCENT - Well, maybe because we haven't got it set up yet, to be able to do that either. So, that would come in time, and the same people might be involved: don't know that yet, but I can't speak on behalf of the minister for Macquarie Point.

CHAIR - Any other questions on that or -

Ms O'CONNOR - On infrastructure?

CHAIR - On machinery of government or anything like that, at this point? I've got a few other things I want to go to.

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Ms LOVELL - Yes, can I ask just one question, just on an entirely different subject: minister, when did you become aware that Madeleine Ogilvie was party to a Supreme Court matter?

Mr VINCENT - It's a complicated case that I will not be answering any questions on.

Ms LOVELL - So you can't tell us when you become aware of that?

Mr VINCENT - No.

Ms LOVELL - Were you aware that she was party to a Supreme Court matter prior to 17 November 2025?

Mr VINCENT - I won't be answering any questions in relation to that matter.

Ms O'CONNOR - But you know the answer. If you know the answer, you're sort of obliged to give it, aren't you?

Mr VINCENT - I'm giving an answer: it's a complicated legal situation that I won't be answering and taking any further comment on.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's a line, not an answer.

Ms LOVELL - Just one last question, and you can answer it however you see fit: the Treasurer has confirmed that Cabinet approved, or made the decision to approve, the legal fees; can you tell us when that decision was made by Cabinet?

Mr VINCENT - No comment on that matter.

Ms LOVELL - Okay.

CHAIR - To go, then, back to the - and it's a bit hard to know, this is why I was asking about how the money - how we can track the money, but I want to take you to the policy and parameter statement, where you've - there's obviously the parameter changes and the policy changes. State Growth, being a fairly large entity, has administrative parameter adjustments; these are unavoidable cost increases in 2026-27 of \$80.7 million; what sorts of things does that cover? You have acknowledged here that you are going to have that much more money to cover unavoidable costs.

Mr VINCENT - I will actually put that across to the acting secretary who's been working through this.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, there's \$86 million in 2025-26, which is essentially reprofiling the existing funding across the program and different funding programs.

CHAIR - So, 86.7: where does that figure come from?

Mr GREGORY - I'm sorry, what's the number you're talking about?

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CHAIR - I was talking about the number in the policy and parameters statement - administrative and parameter adjustments: every department's got them. Health's is massive; yours is not so big.

Mr GREGORY - Yes. It says there's 77.9.

CHAIR - No. It says in my budget paper 80.7 in 2026-27.

Mr GREGORY - I'm sorry, yes, so it's 80.7, and essentially it's reprofiling existing funding, so of that 80.7, the 51.8 is just reprofiling of existing funding.

CHAIR - What does that mean?

Mr GREGORY - It's moving the funding between years and adjusting between years.

CHAIR - It doesn't relate to inflation; it doesn't relate to anything like that?

Mr GREGORY - The advice I have is that 51.8 is reprofiling of the \$86 million from 2025-26 -

CHAIR - So projects haven't been delivered coming forward, yes.

Mr GREGORY - They're reprofiled out, yes, over the out-years.

CHAIR - What about the 30 million?

Mr GREGORY - There's a small amount of indexation. There's 16.5 million that relates to Australian Government funding expenditure estimates and they're just updates to expenditure estimates from the Australian Government; there's some retained revenue, expenditure updates of 15 million, and then there's just some minor adjustments from Treasury.

CHAIR - In 2027-28 it is 29.5 million. It would help if I put my glasses on.

Mr GREGORY - Yes.

CHAIR - And then 53.6 million in 2028-29: what do they relate to, because obviously this has been recognised by Treasury, or somebody.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, they're the same categories; they were just different amounts across those categories. For example, in 2028-29 of that 53 million, 10.5 is due to reprofile on existing funding; 22 is updating Australian Government expenditure estimates; and there's \$16 million in updates in retained revenue.

CHAIR - I appreciate you've gone to the effort of actually answering that question, because no other department has, so thank you. In terms of the savings end and, again, it's a bit hard because this is not going to be the same department, but the operational efficiencies that are required in 2026-27 is: \$16.4 million; then \$67.8 million in 2027-28; 69.3 in 2028-29; and \$76.7 million in 2029-30. Minister, what specific saving measures and targets are being set by Building Tasmania to ensure that the proposed savings measures are achieved?

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Mr VINCENT - Part of that is the efficiency of setting up the new department for me and where I'm sitting at. It's nothing to do with the employment numbers or anything like that; it's just about the efficiency we will be able to drive into the new department. How they've put those numbers across, I'm not sure. It's just been -

CHAIR - That's the challenge for all of us.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, it is at the moment, and all this was formed up in the budget period while we're trying to form up a whole new division as well. So, it has been awkward for everybody in how we've communicated in and out of Treasury on that, and to the Treasurer. I'm not sure whether the secretary has any more knowledge in that area.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, there were a number of specific amounts with regard to FTE reductions and operational efficiencies associated with the machinery-of-government change announced by the Premier in the state of the state. It's been known publicly for some time that there are 250 FTE reductions out of the machinery-of-government change and \$250 million savings over five years.

When the machinery-of-government change was announced, there was still quite a lot of work to do in terms of the detail of how that would work, but the announcement came in the middle of the Budget, so we've had to make some provisional allocation of the operational efficiencies across the budget papers. There are a number of things we were doing already, looking at the accommodation footprint and how we might reduce that. There's been work across government around utilisation of office accommodation and there've been significant changes, particularly since COVID. So, across government there's a general view to rationalise office accommodation. That's one of the things we were doing. We're also just looking at how we might use technology to help us be more efficient and also to reduce consumables, and those sorts of things. So, we're working through that.

A lot of the operational efficiencies will be fleshed out as we work through the machinery-of-government change. As we move functions out, we start to consolidate and gain some efficiencies and, obviously, there's the 250 FTE reduction that will have an impact. The operational efficiencies in the first year, the smaller number actually reflects the cost of working through separations and voluntary redundancies as well. That's why the number is different in year one.

CHAIR - So, you said 250 FTE over five years, was that correct?

Mr GREGORY - No, so there's \$250 million of savings over five years. The 250 FTE reduction will happen in a shorter timeline than that. That will occur through voluntary redundancies, workforce renewals, natural attrition - there'll be a range of mechanisms we use to achieve that reduction.

CHAIR - I'm glad you mentioned some provision for separations. What is the exact provision you're making for separations?

Mr GREGORY - It's not so much we've made an exact provision, but it's recognising that the savings we would expect to achieve through reduction in FTE isn't recognised in year one, if that makes sense. So, rather than showing a figure for a full-year reduction in salary

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costs, employee costs, that's essentially been assumed to be largely taken up by severance payments.

CHAIR - So, when will these 250 FTE need to exit to give you a snowflake's chance of meeting the expected budget savings?

Mr GREGORY - We would like to achieve a significant component of that in the next financial year. Whether we can achieve 250 reductions in the next financial year, I'm not sure that that's achievable, but -

CHAIR - Then, isn't it a fact, if that's the case, minister - because, effectively, to achieve the savings target, you need everyone to exit on 1 July, which is not very far away. And, if you don't, if it's not until right toward the end of the coming financial year that we will soon be entering, then one would think that the operational efficiencies that jump up significantly won't be achievable because you'll have too many separations to pay.

Mr VINCENT - We are expecting it to be gradual as we move things across.

CHAIR - That's the point I'm making, minister. If they don't all happen in July, then however late they occur in the financial year coming, then you're going to have those costs flowing right across the next financial year as well.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, that depends on a number of factors including the length of employment.

CHAIR - I understand that, but you must have some idea of what we're talking about. You know who works in your department.

Mr GREGORY - True, but the statement that everyone has to leave in July is not quite correct.

CHAIR - It depends on how you've budgeted for it. You said that the costs were sort of factored into this coming financial year. Unless you separate those people early in the financial year, the costs will flow through the next financial year.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, true, but there are ways that we could deal with that in terms of making provision or rolling over funds.

CHAIR - How?

Mr GREGORY - There are a range of things we can work through with Treasury in that regard. What I would say, the assumption that we need to separate everyone in July, assumes that everyone would achieve the maximum benefit under TNVR, which is 48 weeks, if you've served the maximum time. That's essentially having worked in the department for 22 years. There are going to be a number of people who have not worked for that long, so there will be people leaving at various times throughout the year and we'll just need to work our way through that and in line with that.

CHAIR - Does your budget operational efficiency of \$67.8 million in 2027-28 contemplate separation payments as well?

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Mr GREGORY - The operational efficiencies in out-years are a broad allocation.

CHAIR - Guesses?

Mr GREGORY - They're a broad allocation.

Ms O'CONNOR - They're the ambition. Is that right? The target?

CHAIR - The Treasurer will call it ambition, or someone in -

Ms O'CONNOR - We hear that the operational efficiencies are expected to deliver somewhere around 250 FTE reduction. What modelling has been done within the agency about how many of those roles and functions could be undertaken by artificial intelligence?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, we haven't done any specific modelling to identify which roles would be done by artificial intelligence. We haven't sat down and assessed every position. We certainly haven't done that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Well, given that there's an AI Accelerator Project with \$8.5 million worth of funding administered through DPAC in the Budget, and we know that the secretaries are meeting to discuss the AI policy. The Department of State Growth must have undertaken some work on how it could integrate AI into its systems once it becomes Building Tasmania. Is that true?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, we have not sat down and looked specifically at how we might integrate that at this point in time. We will certainly look to do that. As I mentioned before, one of the things we would just look to do, as a course of business as usual, regardless of the machinery-of-government change, is how we use technology to become more efficient. I don't limit that conversation to AI. AI is quite a specific component of technology, but we can also look to how we use our systems, existing systems more efficiently and better and use all the functionality of things like our document management system and our financial system to just have more efficient processes anyway. Part of that is process mapping and understanding the steps we put into processes and how we eliminate steps that are duplicated or redundant with the passage of time and legislation and technology.

When I talk about technology it's all of that. AI will be a component of that, but that will be considering - from my perspective with AI: does it help you become more efficient? Does it help you reduce costs? What is it that you're trying to do? We can use AI to achieve a better outcome with the same resources or potentially use AI to achieve the outcome we need, perhaps with less resources. I think that's got to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you. Minister, the Premier said during the state of the state address that his government would be fully embracing AI. What's your understanding, as minister, about how that might affect or be implemented within the portfolios for which you have responsibility?

Mr VINCENT - We have had minor broad discussion with some of the councils as minister for Planning, especially with Huon, that are developing an AI process on some of the permitted things and see how that's working and how the testing is going with that. I believe there are parts of State Growth and the Planning Office that are monitoring that closely. At this

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point, I can't think of any other discussions outside of a briefing from Mat Healey to the Minister's Local Government Group a couple of weeks ago on very general terms about what he was looking at with the AI Accelerator. That's the only meetings I've been involved on AI at this point.

Ms O'CONNOR - What did you say?

Mr VINCENT - It was broadly the benefits that they'd seen from some of the other things they've been looking at around the country, I guess, and just the advantages of it. Most of the conversation was probably more from some of the councils that were finding that they could see benefits in handling of the paperwork to eliminate some of the timelines involved with, in this case, planning approvals. It was a 10-minute broad presentation.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. So, Mr Healey has come to talk about the advantages, potentially, of AI within government. Was there any conversation about potential risks, the need for guardrails, how you protect the personal data or biometric data of the people of Tasmania, including, for example, the biometric data that you gather through licencing of people to drive? Is the conversation all about how terrific it's going to be and the efficiencies it's going to deliver, or is it a realistic conversation that includes raising an awareness of potential risk?

Mr VINCENT - That was certainly part of the conversation. Like I said, it was just a brief overview. I don't think it went any more than 10 or 15 minutes at the very most. It was a very short thing before he had to go. But, he had talked about privacy and I know in other situations under my Transport ministry where the dep sec, with her role in several national boards, where they're looking at licencing and other issues that could be collated under electronic systems instead of manual systems.

Ms O'CONNOR - But that's already happening, isn't it?

Mr VINCENT - The security around that is the only other side of it that I've seen discussed on the way that privacy works.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just check, that is already happening because of a regulation that went through this place maybe five or six years ago -

Mr VINCENT - No, digital licencing is not -

Ms O'CONNOR - where the biometric data, that is the licencing information of Tasmanians, without their consent, was sent off into some cache that's administered by the Commonwealth, which is now negotiating with the Trump administration about the transfer of our data, biometric data. So, that's already happening, isn't it?

Mr VINCENT - There are already controls in place, but I'm just saying that's the only discussion that I've been involved with about what level of security is needed.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. I just need to hear you, as minister, state that you are aware that this new technology may deliver efficiencies, but it also comes with responsibilities on government to protect citizens' rights - human rights.

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Mr VINCENT - Fully aware of it. It was interesting on the digital licence - and I know we've jumped across to another ministry here now - about how it does crossover to the different sorts of licences as well. I am aware of some of the things I wasn't aware of with digital things some months ago.

CHAIR - We may come back to that - the licencing. Just going to the savings expectation and requirements - many of the savings that've been described in the budget papers relating to agencies include things like procurement improvements, leasing consolidations, which I know the acting secretary's talked about, and marketing reductions. These basically represent routine operational management that's been going on for years, particularly since COVID, as the acting secretary said, rather than actual structural reform. So, can you identify which savings measures represent genuinely new actions as distinct from business-as-usual efficiency that's already occurring?

Mr VINCENT - I'd have to ask the acting secretary about that because I'm not directly involved with the mechanics of machinery, at this stage, other than general discussions.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, right at the moment, no, I couldn't pinpoint exactly what we're going to do. There is a lot of work to do with the machinery-of-government change. I'm sure the committee would appreciate this is a big change. There is a lot to work through. So, right at the moment, I couldn't point to a range of things - specific initiatives that we'd be putting in place.

CHAIR - That being the case - and I accept that it's early days - minister, how will you monitor and report the efficiency measures that you take, so that we can see - well, you can be assured as much as anything and hopefully then reassure the parliament that we're on track?

Mr VINCENT - My belief in some of that comes back to the way I run a business and think about how I administer things. Because Building Tas will be something that I will be responsible for, the input into how we set it up and how we drive those efficiencies, is something that I will have - not a day-to-day hands-on role because that's not the minister's role

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CHAIR - No, no.

Mr VINCENT - but the oversight that we are looking, and the efficiencies we're looking for driving this and also the inputs that we have had from a lot of industry sectors that are frustrated about certain non-performances or timelines for certain things, is something I can drive.

CHAIR - The question was more, minister, how will you monitor the operational efficiencies that your departments are required to make?

Mr VINCENT - I believe that our regular weekly, fortnightly and monthly meetings will have part of this as a set part of the agenda and it'll be more focused on the projects. That's where I think, or believe, that a lot more efficiency would be. We talked about a couple of projects that have gone wrong earlier and what we've learned from that is that you have to put systems and that in place from day one of monitoring. A lot of those systems are already in place with our Cabinet subcommittees and other committees that we have in place.

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CHAIR - Yeah, I appreciate that. I think -

Mr VINCENT - All that's recorded.

CHAIR - We're talking about slightly different things here. I'm talking about how the operational efficiencies that we've already talked about, acknowledging that there's still work to be done on that, how can you monitor it? Because, if we get to this table again next year, and actually you haven't made the operational efficiencies, then I'll be asking you at what point did you realise things were going off track? So, in terms of achieving what's in the budget papers, I know some of it's a bit aspirational, perhaps mythical to some extent - that's my statement, not yours and, you know, based on what the Treasurer sort of said, it was ambitious, or someone at the table with him did. So, how will you monitor this - say, if you get halfway through the year and rather than achieving 50 per cent of the savings required, you've only achieved 5 per cent - how will you monitor it, and how will that be visible to you, and then visible to the parliament?

Mr VINCENT - I'm going to hand to Shane to give a bit more detail on where the focus is starting to go towards measuring those efficiencies as -

CHAIR - In dollar terms, I'm talking about.

Mr VINCENT - In dollar terms - on a more regular basis.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, I'll touch on two components. One is, we have an FTE reduction target, and the Premier has talked about what the broader targets are, I think the Treasurer as well, across government over the next few years, in terms of FTE reduction. There is regular reporting from State Service Management Office that goes to Cabinet, I believe it might be the budget committee of Cabinet, and that reporting is now provided under routine disclosure and published. And I think, since -

CHAIR - No, it's not Shane, that's the thing. It used to be.

Mr GREGORY - No, no there is. Since February, there's, been a routine disclosure through DPAC.

CHAIR - Where can I find that? Where can I see it?

Mr GREGORY - That will be through the DPAC website. We can certainly -

CHAIR - Can you provide the link to us, minister, about where we can see this? Because that's the documentation we need to see, to see how things are progressing, surely.

Mr GREGORY - In terms of FTE, and it is done through a routine disclosure and we can certainly provide that. And it provides -

CHAIR - But that's just with regards to FTEs.

Mr GREGORY - That's FTE and it's across government. With regard to operational efficiencies, and I think the Treasurer said in committee on Monday, that operational efficiencies will be reported back and progress will be reported back through budget committee.

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Which is what I would expect; having allocated operational efficiency targets across government, the normal process would be for agencies, through their portfolio minister, to give feedback on what those initiatives will be, when they would be implemented, what they would achieve -

CHAIR - How you are going tracking against your target?

Mr GREGORY - Exactly. And there'd be regular reporting back to Cabinet committee, budget committee of Cabinet on -

CHAIR - So, minister, if I ask you a question without notice in November, because you're here in our Chamber, which is a very nice place for you to be, you will be able to tell me how you're tracking against that because you will have had regular updates from the department on how you're tracking against the operational efficiencies?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly I would like to think that will be the case. Yes. It needs to be.

CHAIR - Well you might like to be prepared. Because if we don't, I mean, if we just get to next year and it's all gone pear-shaped - you know, we'll just think it was all mythical numbers after all.

Mr VINCENT - Fully aware of the concentrations. It's the same for us on making sure we understand those numbers on a more regular monthly basis.

Ms O'CONNOR - Would it be possible to ask some questions about the Tasman Bridge at this point?

Ms LOVELL - What was that major? Or under capital investment?

CHAIR - Ask it here, because it's not actually a project at the moment, is it?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, regrettably. Minister, are you able to update the committee on the *Nuyina's* refuelling saga? As we know, the ship has been deemed unsafe by the harbour master to travel under the Tasman Bridge, and we're all aware of the tragic history, but as we understand it, 'all possible options are on the table on the part of government' as you try to resolve the refuelling issue, noting that that ship has to travel up to Burnie to be refuelled. How do you deal with this, given that the harbour master has said it is unsafe for that vessel to travel to Selfs Point under the bridge, and that in the modelling exercise, too many times it hit the bridge? How do you resolve that? You can't shrink the ship. The Antarctic Division says it's not going to work on the hull. Where are we going? Is this just false hope, or -

Mr VINCENT - No. There are a lot of different moving parts to this and it's become what could be said to be - and has been indicated in the papers, a simplistic thing of just getting fuel into a ship has a lot more complications to it. I will ask the acting secretary to summarise because he's been involved with it quite recently in the last couple of days, but, first of all, we went out for expressions of interest -

Ms O'CONNOR - expressions of interest for what?

Mr VINCENT - For the refuelling.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Yes.

Mr VINCENT - We knew that the modelling had issues in getting it through the bridge. The pipeline was one of the options, both by land or sea; then a barge is another option, and being able to just fuel up with a fleet of tankers that I think has been talked about a fair bit in the last few days as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Road tankers?

Mr VINCENT - Road tankers.

Ms O'CONNOR - Which the Commonwealth has rejected, hasn't it, as a solution?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. There is awkwardness about that because of the high volume of fuel they take on and the amount of tankers needed. We have been exchanging letters with the federal minister, and when the federal minister was down for the commissioning of the project for the new berth, we had verbal discussions about it as well, some of the complications, and they have chosen to refuel, for the next 12 months while we continue to work through the process - refuel in Burnie for the next 12 months as a more sensible option in their eyes for themselves. Since then we have been fortunate to pick up the interim CEO of TasPorts that has quite a lot of port experience from around the world, and he has now been asked by DSG to look into the various options and see what is practical, including whether there are different ways of assisting the ship getting through the bridge.

Ms O'CONNOR - Would that be pulled through by a tug?

CHAIR - Under it, hopefully.

Mr VINCENT - Not over it.

CHAIR - Not through it either: perhaps under it.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, we're talking potentially about tugs or something like that to take it through -

Mr VINCENT - I haven't been briefed on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - that quite narrow gap between the spans.

Mr VINCENT - Yes. I've just got some highlighted points here that I will just read these couple of lines out for you. Firstly, modelling of the *Nuyina* transition the Tasman Bridge by the independent harbour master is continuing. So, the modelling will look at different tug configurations and if any of the hull modifications to the *Nuyina* would make a material difference to the risks associated with the transit, but there - I will hand over now to the acting secretary, who has been involved with some discussions in the last few days about where some of those other solutions may sit at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - And perhaps if we could have an indication of timelines on the harbour master's ongoing examination of the question, and the new acting CEO of TasPort's work to examine options.

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Mr VINCENT - Thank you. Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - What's the timeline?

Mr VINCENT - I should just say the other option that is now being examined as part of the waterfront reconfiguration is holding a level of fuel in a tank there that can go straight into the ship as the other option as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - That would require transport of fuel by road of course, wouldn't it?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, but it can be filled up on a gentler timeframe so that that litreage is available when the ship comes in, so it wouldn't be a mass effort, it would just happen more naturally over the time period when they were away. I will hand to the acting secretary at the moment.

Mr GREGORY - Thank you, minister, and through you, it is a complex discussion in terms of how to refuel the *Nuyina*. A number of options that might normally be considered as particularly viable are a little bit more challenging in Hobart simply because of the volume of bunkering that does occur, or the lack of volume, appropriately. As the minister said, the interim CEO of TasPorts brings a lot of experience from overseas ports, which is really beneficial.

We have engaged with TasPorts, particularly with his expertise, to help us through. This is not within our normal sphere of expertise. Having Captain Gray available to us has been very fortuitous. He is looking at three potential broad solutions: one being bunkering from an appropriate barge, that this is quite a common way of doing things in ports around the world; the second is looking at whether there is the option to provide bunker storage on the wharf, and as the minister said, that can be topped up over time and drawn down when the ship comes in for refuelling; and the third option is to just go back and revisit the modelling to understand, is there any other way that the *Nuyina* could transit upstream?

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Timeline?

Mr GREGORY - I think we've probably got a couple of months' worth of work to do exploring each of those options. The latter option, I think could take a bit longer, or in fact it could be proven fairly quickly that it's still not feasible. I think we would be looking at this over the next couple of months, I think, as a general timeline.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Still on bridges -

Mr VINCENT - Can I add another little bit to that, please: the success of this can also be around the opportunity to refuel other ships coming in to Hobart that need fuel requirements as well, to make it a bit more commercially viable to either the port or the government, so that is also being looked at as a separate part of this as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, we're talking about an allocation of public funds towards establishing a refuelling depot, potentially on Macquarie 6, or where?

Mr VINCENT - No, they're just all the options that are being looked at.

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Ms O'CONNOR - At some point if, for example - because it sounds like, minister, you think it might not be a bad idea to have a storage and refuelling facility on the docks somewhere at some point, somehow that will have to be paid for, and that would be something that comes out of what, TasPorts' budget or Building Tasmania's, or the does Commonwealth chip in?

Mr VINCENT - This is what the captain's looking at now, that how - when you do have the cost of whatever option, the advantages that it may have to be able to recover those costs from other shipping operations.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. I'm sure you got questions about the Bridgewater Bridge in the other place the other day, but there's been some really concerning reports, particularly on the ABC, about some of the engineering issues that were raised with the contractors during construction, the fact that the bridge had cracks in it; what's your level of confidence as minister that the bridge is as well constructed as it's possible to be, what kind of stress testing, if any, State Growth or any of its consultants do on that structure, and on what kind of a basis?

Mr VINCENT - My confidence is growing all the time in this area because of the changes in technology.

Ms O'CONNOR - I hope so.

Mr VINCENT - We've seen a rapid increase, even in the short time I've been in the role, in the availability of various ways of monitoring bridges and structures. I will hand over to Mr Moloney, who is involved in both Bridgewater Bridge and the Tasman Bridge, and can talk in a lot more detail.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Succinctly, thanks, Mr Maloney, to go to that question of what kind of stress testing or monitoring of the engineering works on that bridge, and if there's a sort of a rolling program of that work? Just to be sure, to be sure.

Mr VINCENT - No. There certainly is, and that is still developing. The federal government has assisted the work with the state government and is continuing to develop an ongoing and improving process on some of those things that Mr Moloney is involved with. I will hand to him.

Mr MOLONEY - I guess in terms of responding specifically to the question about what ongoing stress testing, you could say, what we did implement as part of the project is that we undertook very detailed and accurate surveys of each of the piles or piers that basically hold up the bridge. We made sure that they were installed during the construction period because the actual loads that this bridge receives under general operation quite often are, in most circumstances, less than what is actually incurred during construction. So, it was important for us to see whether or not, basically, the piles and piers would move during construction because that's when all of that heavy equipment was on; it's when all the components aren't completely connected. So, we did monitor it throughout the construction period and we did not observe any movements that were not unreasonable or unanticipated. We now have all of that survey information. It means that, going forward, the state can continue to survey the bridge and reconfirm at its discretion that none of the members are moving outside of the limits that we would anticipate. That's how we put in place protocols to continue to monitor the bridge.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Mr Moloney. You said that the state can continue to monitor the bridge. Has any further monitoring or stress-testing been undertaken since the bridge was opened for operation?

Mr MOLONEY - We have been continuing to survey it through to, I believe, the last survey was in January of this year. Because of the cost of the surveys, we were undertaking them monthly up until that stage. Given that there was no movement at that stage, our intention would be to survey it at least once before the end of the defects liability period.

Ms O'CONNOR - When's that?

Mr MOLONEY - It's three years after construction completion. So, we have a bit over two years to go because construction completion was a few months after opening completion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. That's sort of the defect period, potentially, and I understand why the state would want to do more monitoring within that period. What's the rolling program of stress-testing - for want of a better term, because that is what you're doing - that piece of infrastructure?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, there are different parts of the stress-testing - sorry, geotech - as in the pylons down right into the rock base or the solid foundations, there are the piers, below the water, the piers - not the water, under the deck - and a lot of things on the deck, plus gantries and things like that as well. I'll let Mr Moloney give the details on those breakups.

Mr MOLONEY - Because we have, I guess, significant confidence in our design, the surveying that we're undertaking is simply to validate the certifications that already exist. It's important to note that, although the concerns were raised by an engineer who was a member of an advisory group to the department, the actual design responsibility sat with the contractor. So, the design engineers designed the bridge and certified it, a separate proof engineer has independently reviewed and signed off on it, and an independent verifier, which is another firm, also independently reviewed and confirmed it was designed and constructed in accordance with the design. So, we have a high degree of confidence that the bridge isn't going to move.

We've monitored it for a number of years now and it hasn't moved. We'll monitor it again before the end of the defects liability period to confirm that it hasn't moved. We then have the opportunity to decide how much further investment or the frequency in which surveys would be undertaken after that point. We're proposing that, following the survey, towards the end of the defects liability period, we'd reassess our thoughts because if it hasn't moved in that time, realistically, the only thing that is likely to cause any movement would be a very extreme event outside the design elements. That's where we're talking about if there was a major -

Ms O'CONNOR - An extreme flooding event, for example.

Mr MOLONEY - Flooding event, earthquake, ship collision - noting that it is a relatively shallow body of water, but probably the most likely one would be in the event that we had a very extreme earthquake event. It would make sense that we would then go back and inspect a lot of our assets, including the Bridgewater Bridge.

Mr VINCENT - All assets would be affected in that case.

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CHAIR - Probably this building as well.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Minister, whatever happened to the Channel Highway corridor study?

Mr VINCENT - Channel Highway corridor study is still in place and it's been worked through, and I'll ask the dep sec to expand on that. One of the good things that I'm experiencing as the minister over the last 12 months is that we now nearly have all our major roads around the state with corridor strategies in place, which is assisting us in prioritising safety projects, cosmetic projects, intersection upgrades and widening, and being able to talk to both council and community or community groups that have specific areas in that a lot better. It's also allowing us to talk to Infrastructure Australia about the ongoing funding, because quite often when we end up with, let's say, it's \$120 million for an allocated corridor, everybody thinks that's just going to be spent bang in the next year, when it is an allocation to projects over a number of years and sometimes that can continue on. With that summary, I'll just ask the dep sec to talk about the Channel one.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Sure, I note for this particular study, the consultation occurred in 2019 and it was released in 2020. The community down there is very passionate about all of the things that were proposed. In fact, just this week there was a motion put to council about it, so I'm wondering if you could give us an update please?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly. There are some parts of it that we have been working on that probably weren't part of the original site, like the Grove intersection and now the Leslie Vale intersection, but I will let the dep sec work through that.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I'll come back with an update on the status of that study and release. I don't have it at hand.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Has it fallen off the list of priorities or - it's been a long time and the community hasn't heard very much.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, let me get the details and I'll come back to you in the session.

Mr VINCENT - In some of that, sorry, I was thinking of the Huon and getting the Huon and the Channel mixed up.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Specifically the bridge there with no pedestrian access, the shared pathway between Huntingfield and Margate -

Ms HEYDON - This is in relation to Margate?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes.

Ms HEYDON - If you're speaking about the active transport corridor that we did a preliminary study on, as opposed to a broader road corridor study?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes, the community is specifically interested in pedestrian access on the bridge and the shared pathway between Huntingfield and Margate.

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Ms HEYDON - I can answer that. We have completed a preliminary study that was funded both by ourselves and the council. Through that, we have assessed the bridge and one of the options that we're looking to progress further and do further planning on which will commence in the first quarter of the next financial year is a separated pedestrian bridge for that full walkway. That's expected to start, let's say July, August. It'll take us about six months.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - This year?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, it'll take us about six months to do up that design. That will then inform further options that we can be talking with the community about, as well as costs and funding requests going forward.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Okay. If I wanted some ongoing updates for this project, how would I achieve that?

CHAIR - He's sitting there and he's also sitting right there.

Mr VINCENT - I am more than happy as they come because we are working on that as a live project at the moment.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - That's good to hear, thank you.

CHAIR - You'll be able to do that once you've done your inaugural speech.

Mr VINCENT - The interesting thing is a lot of letters have been received into my office regarding that project in fairly recent times -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Me, too.

Mr VINCENT - but people in my office as well as - I do know that bridge and area quite well and have family members down that way who've made comment. It's been interesting to see how DSG is looking at that from how it connects up with the council walkways to actually get to places and not just be a bridge across a waterway. It has to connect up.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - It means you'll be able to walk from Snug to Tarroona on the pathways, which is amazing.

Mr VINCENT - Which is quite amazing. The link-up and the different thoughts are pretty good.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, we are happy to share the link for the project and the updates and it'll be updated with relation to the information I provided about the next stages and development of further options and costings.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Excellent, thank you.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, are you aware of how many SES and other specialist roles exist within the Department of State Growth and what the total cost of these positions is?

Mr VINCENT - No.

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Ms THOMAS - Is that something you'd be able to provide to the committee?

Mr VINCENT - The acting secretary has indicated we will have to take that on notice. Thank you.

Ms THOMAS - Are you aware of how many band 9 positions exist in the department?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly, I wouldn't be but -

Ms THOMAS - I can take that on notice.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you.

CHAIR - It can be provided later in the day if you can facilitate that, minister.

Mr GREGORY - If we can pull that together today, we will.

Ms THOMAS - Thanks.

Mr VINCENT - We did that with quite a few things yesterday as we worked our way through.

CHAIR - That's fine. We'll write to you with it, if you can't get it to us by the end of the day.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, I'd like to talk to you about the widening of the Tasman Highway at Cambridge, the South East Traffic Solutions project -

CHAIR - Can we do that under CIP because that's one of the projects in Infrastructure?

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm happy to, except it's very similar to the question that Clare just asked, so, I mean -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - It's about a corridor study, which was in 2.1. This is strategy.

CHAIR - The strategy wasn't an actual project that's in the infrastructure plan. Ask it and we will -

Ms O'CONNOR - I mean, we will just get it out of the way. How about we get it out of the way, Chair. Minister, this is a project, 80 per cent federally funded, advertised for public comment in May 2018, so that's eight years ago now; it was to be completed in 2021, and we've had numerous deadlines for completion come and go ever since then. I think you and I know why it's been delayed, but let's get into that a little bit. Last year in the Council, I asked you about this project and the delays, and you said that you could provide the map of habitat critical to the survival of the two critically endangered orchid species on that site. You did say that you'd be able to provide me with a copy of that map. Has that work been undertaken? Is that map available?

Mr VINCENT - I wasn't sure whether I've ever talked about the orchids before, but knowing the orchids are there, the highway has now moved from where it used to be with the

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orchids, so the design or the route of the highway is now different, so it doesn't interfere with some of the anomalies that we had to start with.

Ms O'CONNOR - Could you flesh that out a little bit, please, because I hadn't heard that there'd been a change in the government's position on widening that road through Milford Forest, so the area of bush there that's got the critically endangered orchids in and now, as we know, a pair of breeding masked owls. Are you saying that it is no longer the government's intention to widen the road through that forest?

Mr VINCENT - No, it is not - pick the words there. It's not through the forest, but through that area still, but moving further on to the golf course side of the road, not the forest - Milford Forest side of the road.

Ms O'CONNOR - When was that decision made?

Mr VINCENT - Quite some time ago with the - through DSG and the design. I'd have to ask the dep sec to work through all those things, but quite some time ago, and -

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, has DSG presented an assessable proposal to the Commonwealth Environment department?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, yes, we have, and we've been engaging with EPBC on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - When did that scope and proposal project go to the Commonwealth?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I will come back with the exact data. I think the original one was probably five years ago, but we've been doing an iterative process with the EPBC. Part of this was trying to minimise those impacts as much as we could, so we redesigned, have engaged with the stakeholders around that and provided that through to EPBC, but let me come back with when that submission was. I do believe it was late last year, the most up to date.

Ms O'CONNOR - So that would mean that the map of habitat critical to the survival of the species has been prepared and submitted to the Commonwealth.

Ms HEYDON - Yes. Let me get the details of what was submitted and when we submitted it.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Has there been any mapping -

CHAIR - So do you want to take that on notice?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. Thank you. Has there been mapping of any habitat critical for the survival of Tasmanian masked owls, which we've known since the 1990s are breeding in Milford Forest?

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Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I will come back in relation to the owls. Just confirming, we're currently preparing the preliminary documentation for the critically endangered orchid that's listed under the EPBC act, including options for securing land for an environmental offset, as well as negotiating with the landowners and the Commonwealth for final land acquisitions.

Ms O'CONNOR - What plans has DSG prepared for any offset? Who prepared them and when?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I will come back with the detail of the status and the preparation.

Ms O'CONNOR - So what would this offset be?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, it will propose offsets, but it will be determined by the Commonwealth if that's acceptable.

Ms O'CONNOR - So can I just be absolutely clear here: the Department of State Growth has submitted the map of habitat critical to the survival of the species of orchids to the Commonwealth?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, we've identified - as you might be aware, there was a previous design which brought a bigger impact on orchid species. We have redesigned to try to minimise our impact. We couldn't remove it altogether, so now part of what we're looking at is offset, and to demonstrate that we are minimising our impact.

Ms O'CONNOR - Does that mean that because, unfortunately, minister, your predecessor, minister Ferguson, foolishly made a promise to the golf course there that the road widening would not impact on them, so a decision was made by government that it would rather threaten critically endangered species than a golf course, so, is the solution where we're at here now, going to have more impact on the golf course? Is that what I'm hearing?

Mr VINCENT - Correct. We've been working with the golf course since day one almost, on this section of road, and it has changed a bit, and there is redesigned work of some of the holes and the alignment of some of their greens that have been worked through with the golf club over a big number of years. I must say that I've been involved with this project since day one, as mayor, also.

Ms O'CONNOR - I know. Our understanding was that as at 23 April 2025, the federal Environment department had not received an assessable project. So, sometime in the past year that documentation has gone to the Commonwealth for assessment under the EPBC act?

Mr VINCENT - We are going to check on that date. My feeling was it was getting towards the end of last year, but I will stand to be corrected on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. I just want to - last couple of questions, Chair, if you don't mind, on the costs of this project: from your answer, last December it became apparent to us that the environmental costs for this \$30 million project were well over half a million dollars, and some of that obviously for consultant fees for North Barker, so that the state government

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could try to get around the EPBC act; what's the current cost of expenditure on consultants for this question of this element of the road widening?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly on this element that you've just been talking about, we would have to take that on notice, and add that with the question on notice so that we give you full details on that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Would it be possible also then to have a copy of that map that you said you might be able to provide last year?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, yes, I will request from the team what we've submitted to as well for -

Ms O'CONNOR - So, we can have a copy of the map that's been prepared by DSG and of the documentation that went to the Commonwealth, because there can't be any commercial-in-confidence there, or any risk to the state, if you're providing to us what documentation went to the Commonwealth?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister. What we can provide we will provide.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Are you taking on notice, minister, what the total cost of environmental consultants for the project is?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, dep sec has acknowledged that and we will add that to the question.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I ask, last question, Chair: has mapping begun on habitat critical for the survival of the Tasmanian masked owls in Milford Forest?

Ms HEYDON - I will come back and confirm what's been looked at in relation to the owls.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, so I will put all of these on notice. Thank you very much.

Mr VINCENT - Chair, I just have the - the acting secretary has an answer to one of the questions that Ms Thomas asked.

Mr GREGORY - Thank you, minister, and through you. In terms of the question regarding the numbers of senior executive service and general stream band 9, as at 31 March, and excluding the head of agency, there were 45 senior executive officers; 37 of those were filled permanently, four were filled with temporary arrangements and four are vacant. In terms of band 9s, there are 16 roles; 13 are filled, nine permanently and four on a fixed-term basis, and the four fixed-term arrangements are true fixed-term arrangements for a specific task, and there are three positions vacant. As part of our approach to vacancy management, generally, in the machinery-of-government change, we would be critically reviewing the vacancies before we made any decisions to fill them. We are, at the moment, holding a number of those positions vacant pending machinery of government and the restructuring.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. So, just to be clear, Mr Gregory: did you say there are 45 senior executive service positions, excluding head of agency?

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Mr GREGORY - Correct.

Ms THOMAS - So, it's 46. Well, 45 plus a secretary position. Thank you.

CHAIR - Do you want the cost?

Ms THOMAS - Oh, yes, I did also - did I ask? Did I ask the cost - the total cost of these positions?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, not to hand because they're all individual contracts and everyone would be on different levels, so we'd have to go back and pull the numbers out specifically.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, do you expect that that's something that you should be able to have access to and you should be able to tell Tasmanians how much these senior executive positions cost? You'll be aware that I've been asking questions repeatedly in the House about this issue across the State Service, and no-one seems to be able to - well the Premier, the government doesn't seem to want to tell me or can't tell me an answer.

Mr VINCENT - I want to seek advice from the acting secretary then. It sounds like, because they're individual contracts it would be a matter of adding each of them up to get a total and -

CHAIR - Wouldn't that be in your information management systems in regard to your staff? Couldn't you just pull that out by interrogating -

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, the information is in systems, but, Chair, as I'm sure you understand, the HR information management systems for across government are, sort of, reaching end of life -

Ms THOMAS - Clunky.

Mr GREGORY - hence the concurrent project we have underway to replace that. So, yes, the information is there, it's just not on hand.

CHAIR - Can it be provided to the committee? The total headline figure for SES and band 9?

Mr GREGORY - I think we can take that on notice. We'll just have to do some work to pull that together.

CHAIR - Sure. We'll write to you on that one.

Output Group 2 - Infrastructure and Transport Services 2.2 Road User Services

Ms THOMAS - Minister, I note in the budget papers, funding for this line item drops off quite significantly over the forward Estimates. I did read the explanation on page 270 of the budget papers, which says:

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The decrease in the Road User Services Output from 2027-28 primarily reflects the profile of expenditure estimates for the Road Safety Levy as well as the profile of expenditure for the Automated Traffic Enforcement Initiative.

The budget decreases from \$24 million in 2025-26 to \$20 million in 2026-27, then to \$11 million in 2027-28, and then further down to \$9 million in the last year of the forward Estimates. I'm just wondering if you can provide a bit more information about what that means in terms of changes to the road safety levy and the automated traffic enforcement initiative?

Mr VINCENT - I'll ask the dep sec to go into a bit more detail on that. This is one of these awkward areas.

Ms THOMAS - Sorry, I was on page 264, line item 2.2.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, one of the main differences in relation to the forecast budget in there is that there was previously \$6.5 million in automated traffic enforcement allocated, which is now actually applied through to the road safety levy. So, it's funded through the road safety levy.

Ms THOMAS - So, is it sitting somewhere different in the Budget?

Ms HEYDON - So, it's in expenses because it's not an appropriation.

Ms THOMAS - Right, okay.

Ms HEYDON - It sits in the road safety levy as opposed to in that budget line item?

Ms THOMAS - So, we can be assured the road safety levy is not being reduced?

Ms HEYDON -No.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, I want to talk about heavy motor vehicle tax and I'm just wondering if you can tell me whether the 2026-27 Budget includes an increase of the heavy motor vehicle tax contribution to local government to cover the impact of heavy vehicles on local roads? Also, whether this increase is included across the forward Estimates?

Mr VINCENT - Not across the forward Estimates at this stage. It was agreed to for the present 12 months and we are working still with Treasury and the Local Government Association to the possibility of continuing that at that level and how we also make sure that it keeps up with changes in that levy. Because, as we know \$1.5 million hadn't been adjusted for a lot of years and we worked it fairly well last year with the Local Government Association to come up with the \$5 million amount. Treasury has said they'd like to work through how that can continue and that's what we're doing at present.

Ms THOMAS - Right. So, I guess you've probably just answered this. You know that the state government collects around \$30 million per year from this tax, but only provides \$1.5 million to local government, despite the fact that councils manage 80 per cent of Tasmania's road network, around 14,400 kilometres. Minister, do you agree that local

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government does deserve a fair share of this, and is that what you will commit to working towards?

Mr VINCENT - I am very supportive of the approach that the Local Government Association and the councils have had with me and the government since I've come into this role in correcting that situation - would be the nice way of putting it. Yes, I am fully understanding, coming from that area, and we're still working through how we do that with a couple of things.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Thank you. Is part of the consideration going forward in the discussions with Treasury looking at distributing the revenue that is collected among all road managers on the same basis that it is charged, on road use?

Mr VINCENT - I haven't delved into how it is allocated, if that's what you mean, to the councils. There are slight changes in formula this year that were quite interesting, which I wouldn't even dare to try to explain at the moment without getting more detail. That is also part of the process, because some of the councils had sizeable increases, some had - and that is to do with the roads with the heavy transport mechanisms working on them, and that's an area that we still need to do a fair bit of work on.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Is that something you will consider, then? Obviously, you have further discussions with local government about this issue.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, it's a very passionate subject at the moment, and I guess, because of my recent history in local government, I am in the middle of it and I'm happy to keep working through it with them.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Thank you.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. I just had it pointed out to me too, it's the grants commission that does the allocations per council with that, and that's where some of the changes came around for this year. There are a few different moving parts to this that we want to - if we're tidying it up - look at and make sure that it's covered off properly.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. I will make sure I will ask the question of the Treasurer next year.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, because we knew it was up to five, yes.

CHAIR - Minister, can we have some up-to-date figures from the last financial year and this current-year financial year, whatever date you can provide them, around the number of unregistered vehicles that have been detected on the roads?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly we - numbers we would need to take on notice. Cynthia?

Ms HEYDON - I will see if we can find out.

CHAIR - I'm interested if that is increasing or not, with cost-of-living pressures and all, sometimes we see -

Mr VINCENT - Unregistered, you said?

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CHAIR - Yes. Unregistered vehicles. There's a regulatory part of this that looks at registration of vehicles, et cetera.

Mr VINCENT - Yes. Certainly, the automated traffic enforcement system we're using does - that is one of the things it can monitor. A little bit of information I have while my dep sec is looking further: between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026, the program issued approximately 60,800 speeding fines, 2310 seat belt fines, 1186 mobile phones and 4310 registration traffic infringements. We need to get a further breakdown on sure that side of things for you.

CHAIR - This is obviously the road type things that can get you from some distance off.

Mr VINCENT - Cameras, what do they call them, the pizza ovens, yes.

CHAIR - They do look a little bit like that. Sometimes you see two quite close together actually it's interesting where they do locate them. Minister, in terms of the numbers that we're seeing, it was far harder to detect people using mobile phones, for example, even wearing seatbelts prior to this technology; are we seeing that change? Maybe more amount of police, I'm not sure, but there's regulatory functions here.

Mr VINCENT - We are seeing improvements in some areas. Over the last two years we've seen the average speed drop by a kilometre each year in the way the fines are. People like RACT and MAIB have taken that as being a dead-set sign that the average speed is decreasing, only had those conversations last week, doing a lot of work in the road safety area on some of these things, and where we go to at the next level to make sure that we continue the focus to, not just reducing the number of deaths on the road, but also the serious accidents, because that risk -

CHAIR - Sadly, serious injuries often cost us more than death.

Mr VINCENT - Sorry, I should say the injuries, not accidents - certainly the injuries where we have a direct focus, and being minister for MAIB, I see that on a monthly basis in the numbers and the risk factors there, as well, and how they calculate their forward estimates on things like that. So, they are very, very passionate about trying to get this road safety improved all the time, and part of this automated traffic enforcement, they can see, as we all can, that it is working, and needs to probably be looked at as a continual program.

CHAIR - How many units have we got in the state, do you know? Okay, it may be a matter for police. I'm not sure where that actually sits.

Mr VINCENT - No, no, it's -

CHAIR - It does sit here? Yes.

Mr VINCENT - It comes under us.

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - It's not with the police; it does come with us.

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CHAIR - Sure. Yes, yes.

Ms HEYDON - Let me just double-check the number, it does vary.

CHAIR - And where are they when I go home?

Ms HEYDON - That I will not share.

Mr VINCENT - I don't think we get told that a lot either.

Ms HEYDON - I don't either.

Mr VINCENT - You don't get it either?

Ms HEYDON - No.

Mr VINCENT - That's no good for you at all.

Ms LOVELL - Sorry, can I ask a follow-up question?

CHAIR - Yes, yes. I've got a couple others, but that's alright.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I'm just wondering if you get more - I'm assuming you do, but more infringements picked up through the mobile units than you do where there's a fixed camera?

Mr VINCENT - Very good question, but I haven't seen -

Ms LOVELL - But do you see a change in behaviour where there are fixed cameras?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly. Certainly. We see an immediate reduction, and I can say, travelling home each evening, or to and from, the one that - the cameras at Cambridge there, you can be moving along at the traffic at a certain speed, and then all of a sudden it drops 20 kilometres an hour as soon as you get near the camera, and then it goes back up again. So everybody's conscious.

CHAIR - Which is not really all that helpful, unless you've got one of these other units sitting down the road.

Mr VINCENT - Sitting down the road: that's quite interesting how the police are also enforcing in that area that I see quite regularly, because they know there's a speed-up factor, so they have positioned themselves to prevent that, at various times.

Ms LOVELL - And does, do those behaviour changes last? Or is it likely the longer the camera is there, do people -

Mr VINCENT - We are seeing a drop in the speed limits, and the speeds moving around, say, the Midland Highway or the east coast, because people are more conscious that they can be caught now with various means, so it's quite noticeable where the traffic flow has been considerably down to what it was over, say, five years ago. A lot of different areas have made

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comment on that, but it's still nowhere near as good, because 64 per cent of the deaths are on rural roads, so we are looking at programs to address, especially - like I talk about the footy clubs in country areas where everybody comes together on a Thursday night, doing it as a great captive market, to be able to work with all the young guys with their modified utes, and everything like that, to let them understand about their mates, their family and country roads.

CHAIR - Can I just follow up that, and we will come back to some of the other matters we will be looking at -

Mr VINCENT - Yes, thank you.

CHAIR - But the point, though, you make, I mean, the country roads, you can't put those, whatever they're called, pizza ovens, because you have - there's too many bends. You know, you need to have a lot, as I understand it, visible, you have some line of sight, and so, in terms of what the Road Safety Task Force, et cetera, are doing, what are they really doing in that space? Because we do acknowledge serious crashes and serious injuries and fatalities do happen more frequently on country roads, and until we can get people to think about how they drive, because they might kill someone, themselves, or seriously injure themselves or someone rather than, I might get caught. That's - you know, you've got to change the behaviour. So, what are they doing in terms of behavioural change? The risk of being caught is, once you're gone, if you see a cop on the side of the road, on a country road, you think, that's it for a while now, you know?

Mr VINCENT - There are two parts to this: for my part, I'm pretty passionate about this. I've been involved with it. My father was a coroner. Road deaths were very much forefront in my family, as I was growing up, so it's continued through. I'd have to say, having speeded a few times myself, but it is an opportunity for me, as a minister, to have some heavy involvement with that. I've been having a lot of discussions with RACT, MAIB -

CHAIR - And the taskforce.

Mr VINCENT - And the taskforce: I have asked for most of the strategies and things that have probably been flexed and that over the years, but I feel they need a revisit over the next six to 12 months. We've just started that process, because there is a lot of data that say, RACT, because of their insurance involvement, see from right around the world, that it is influencing some of my thinking now, that we should be able to really make an impact on the number of deaths that we have and serious injuries. So we're refocusing a fair bit on that. I've had separate discussions with both MAIB and RACT about getting into advertising campaigns and changing the way we advertise, and getting out to these footy clubs in all the country areas as a starting point to get to those concentrations of people there.

CHAIR - Is there a particular campaign they're working on? You know, over the years we've seen different things like it's a limit, not a challenge, that sort of stuff, like 110 with the, you know, the bleeding red circle.

Mr VINCENT - I just noticed some new signage just went out at Cambridge there on some of their new campaigns. I think it's a car running into a mobile phone, so they've just updated some of that. The road safety council have been doing that on a continual basis. There's quite a lot of success, but there are so many other things that I understand that we can start to bring in and utilise the road safety levy for a lot of different areas. Some of it's road safety,

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some of it's advertising, some of it's campaigns. We are really, really looking very hard at the moment on how we educate, and I suppose condition, young people before they get behind the wheel of a car. It's all right for you to go and qualify for your Ls and then get behind the wheel with mum or dad that are nervous about taking you out, or Uncle Bill, and you do enough kilometres. That's still not getting them to a road-ready space, so there is some -

CHAIR - So this goes back to the licencing arrangements?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, it does. There're things there that we're looking at and we've had people come and demonstrate to us computerised modules with all the realistic things that take you through various scenarios that you might encounter. Now, it's not a perfect scenario -

CHAIR - Hazard awareness.

Mr VINCENT - but it does - it has the ability to educate a young person - before they go out - with a lot more knowledge than mum or dad may well and truly give them; but we're also looking at how we can educate mums and dads, or the people who are going to be doing the clocking up the hours with some of the younger people, on the things to tick off on or to help with or to educate that as well. There are quite a few things that we've got going, but I will hand over to somebody who's probably more passionate than I am about road safety, in the dep sec who also does this with a focus to a lot of the national committees she also sits on.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I will answer the question in relation to how many cameras we have under the ATE program. The program that State Growth manages, we've got four fixed cameras and 16 mobile speed cameras or pizza ovens, as the minister likes to call them.

CHAIR - Only four fixed cameras? I must drive past every one of them then on the way down here.

Ms HEYDON - You may well.

CHAIR - I thought there were more.

Ms HEYDON - Well, these are the ones that sit with State Growth.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms HEYDON - This is under the ATE program, which can detect things other than just speed, so it is around that broader safety.

CHAIR - So they've got the ones going to Wivenhoe and Burnie and not in this fixed camera - we're talking the ones on the Midland Highway -

Ms HEYDON - Yes. So -

CHAIR - the ones coming in past the school -

Mr VINCENT - On the Bridgewater Bridge and the Tasman Bridge.

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Ms HEYDON - Yes, so there're ones on the Tasman Bridge, the new ones, yes.

CHAIR - You're right, there're lots of others aside from those, right?

Ms HEYDON - Yes. I won't get into where they all are, but yes -

CHAIR - That's all right.

Ms HEYDON - In relation to your query around the effectiveness of fixed cameras, they do have an effect. It tends to often be a halo effect, though. Often someone will go through and their behaviour will change for that sort of period, one side or the other. We've been doing work around - again to the hearts and minds piece, how do you get that behavioural change? What we've been looking at, and a speed strategy that we're developing at the moment, which we will be getting to the minister soon, is around the most effective is the anywhere, anytime; particularly in our regional and more remote areas, obviously fixed cameras, the other mobile speed detectors aren't necessarily, one, applicable. Sometimes actually having police enforcement is also challenging in those areas. So, we are looking at what's possible and looking across at both national and international where people have got this right and we will look and suggest some things to trial, but that's that sort of piece of how do we sort of bridge that gap - that it's not just a sort of halo effect - you've gone past it and you think you're okay, and then you do unsafe behaviour again; as well as the work that we're doing with our RACT to sort of instil that good behaviour from the start as part of the licencing and education program.

CHAIR - I know one of the Treasurer's revenue-raising things is a review of fees and charges. What fees and charges that sit under this area are being reviewed?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly there's - I will ask Cynthia to give an update on that - but there is a - we've done some work on other states, other areas on where that is different to Tasmania and it's under review. I don't think I've seen the paper on it yet, but we will ask Cynthia to expand on that a little bit more, please.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, we haven't actually started any official review of any of our fees. We have looked at some comparators as to this was part of the work they were looking at in relation to speed management, and is there an effectiveness around, sort of, fines, et cetera. Part of that work was: where does Tasmania sit against other jurisdictions -

CHAIR - In terms of traffic infringement notices?

Ms HEYDON - Yes. Infringement notices but also demerit points, as to where are we comparatively, but that hasn't informed -

CHAIR - That's a revenue-raising measure. I'm talking about the fees that we charge, like when you go in to renew your licence or you go in to register your vehicle or whatever it is: are those fees and charges being reviewed? It seems that there's a pretty broad brush from the Treasurer's approach.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, we haven't started a review of those fees. We understand -

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CHAIR - Are you going to?

Ms HEYDON - Well, it will be part of whatever the broader review of the fees are from the state. We haven't started that process yet.

CHAIR - So, is there a risk here, minister, in this that we could see - I think things should be reviewed. I'm not saying that's the wrong thing to do - but there could be increases to licence renewals or motor vehicle registration or all the things that add to the cost-of-living pressures. We're looking at - the government claims this is a revenue-raising measure. He's pulling that lever - but if we're not actually looking at - what are we looking at in your area? Can the people of Tasmania feel pretty confident that they're not going to see rises in these fees and charges? They're really unavoidable for a lot of people in the country, particularly.

Mr VINCENT - Very conscious of the cost of living, especially at the present with the fuel situation and other pressures. As the dep sec has said, there's not a formal review of those at the moment, but should it be, we're fully aware of any passing on of increased fees is affecting the cost of living. Haven't had that expanded conversation yet, though.

CHAIR - If you do take an active look at some of these, which are pretty much, for most Tasmanians, unavoidable fees or charges that are applied, how will you engage the community in that?

Mr VINCENT - Look, I haven't been part of any discussion on the process or what's been done in the past on that, other than when the time is, we will just work through it with the department and have a look.

CHAIR - Will you consult with people like TasCOSS and the broader community?

Mr VINCENT - I would think that we normally would do with that sort of thing, but having not been involved in the past, I certainly can't make too much comment, but any guidance from you there, Cynthia?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, again, we haven't started or looked at it, but obviously there will be engagement and we would undertake sensitivity testing, too, around any assumptions as to where potentially, if there was an increase, you've got a risk of increased unregistered vehicles and things like that as well. So, what is that sensitivity, and provide advice if requested.

CHAIR - Some of this is done through regulation, obviously. Well, most of it, actually - probably all of it actually.

Ms HEYDON - Yes. It is.

CHAIR - Having returned to the Subordinate Legislation Committee, it seems to me that there are very few regulatory impact assessments that come with the regs - and you will discover this, too, Clare, as you carry on that role - and it seems to me that there seems to be a very free approach to issuing certificates of compliance, saying we don't need an RIS - a Regulatory Impact Statement. If there's a review of this and there is to be a regulatory change at all, minister, can you assure us that there will be a Regulatory Impact Statement that the - something the committee can see, when we consider or examine those regulations?

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Mr VINCENT - I'll certainly take that on board. It's not something I've been involved with in my short time, but, yes, I fully take that on board.

CHAIR - It's pretty clear there will be an impact if these costs go up. Other things on road safety and road user?

Ms O'CONNOR - Is this where I could just ask a question about licencing?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, a few years ago, your predecessor, minister Ferguson, slipped a regulation through this place that enabled the state to provide, without consent, biometric information of hundreds of thousands of Tasmanian licence holders.

Is there an update from government on where that biometric data of Tasmanians that was taken without consent is stored? What guardrails are in place and what processes are underway now in terms of biometric data exchange of driver's licence details with the Commonwealth or any other entity?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly, I will ask the deputy secretary to give you an update on that.

Ms HEYDON - I do have an update on that. Yes, there was an uploading by Tasmania and a couple of other jurisdictions of driver's licence images to what was a segregated area of the National Driver Licence Facial Recognition Solution. Tasmania did not grant the use of the images during this process. It paused any further uploading of images in December 2020.

In July last year, noting we have not entered into a participation agreement with the Australian Government, we have chosen to have all of the Tasmanian driver's licence images removed and associated data removed from that system. Until we review our participation agreement and it meets our requirements, there will be no uploading of any of the digital information from the driver system.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, that's a positive. What's happened to the facial recognition biometric data that was provided initially?

Ms HEYDON - We've recovered it all. We've removed all of our data from that system.

Ms O'CONNOR - You've retrieved it.

Ms HEYDON - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's good. Thank you.

There was a massive petition to government about that from people who are rightly upset because it was the taking of biometric data without their consent?

What's the timeframe on that review of processes that apparently has begun?

Ms HEYDON - Minister, I don't have a timeframe to give you because I would suggest it's probably not the highest priority for us at the moment. For us, we're probably looking at a

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digital driver's licence in relation to Tasmanian licences in the first instance, and we are aware that there is a broader process for engagement with the Australian Government on face-verification services which is managed through Premier and Cabinet, but we're also quite clear around the specifications and requirements of any use of digital driver information and facial and data information.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. What's managed through Premier and Cabinet in terms of facial recognition?

Ms HEYDON - Digital credentials. They have lead on the digital credentials work with the Australian Government.

Ms O'CONNOR - 'Digital credentials', what does that mean?

Ms HEYDON - It's a fancy way of saying basically your digital footprint, ID, all that sort of thing at a national level.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is that within the authority or responsibility of the Deputy Secretary, Mat Healey?

Ms HEYDON - I believe it does sit under Mat.

Mr GREGORY - Minister, that would sit under DSS, which is the broad government Digital Strategy and Services team. That currently sits under the deputy secretary for Community and Government and Services?

Ms O'CONNOR - Who's that?

Mr GREGORY - Noelene Kelly

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you.

CHAIR - If there is anything else, we can come back to it when we come back, otherwise if there are no other questions on 2.2 Road Use, we will come back to 2.3 at 11.15 a.m.

We will take a 15-minute break.

The committee suspended from 10.59 a.m. to 11.16 a.m.

Output Group 2 - Infrastructure and Transport Services

2.3 Passenger Transport

CHAIR - Thanks, Minister, for coming back. In fact, that's always a good start. Into 2.3 Passenger Transport.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Minister, can you give us an update on the free buses? Just the cost and any notable areas where there's been uptake?

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Ms O'CONNOR - Good on you for adopting a good Greens policy, too, minister, I might say. It's been our policy for years. We encouraged you to extend the trial and here we are. You're welcome.

Mr VINCENT - I'm happy to work in wherever I can.

It has been fairly successful at this stage, though pretty honest yesterday in Estimates that I would like to see it continue to grow a little bit more. We're seeing various levels of growth around the state because of the free travel. In some of the regional areas, we're seeing around the 40 per cent mark. Here in Hobart, we're seeing around the 25 to 30 to 32 per cent growth mark. We saw during the school holidays that dropped back by, on average, 9 per cent, but that came back up pretty well.

I'll be interested to see the figures over the next couple of weeks to see if this wet weather has had any effect because of the people walking to it. We know, before the free fair started that with the ferry services that inclement weather did see a drop in patronage on the ferries for obvious reasons once again of walking to the ferries and that. They had to be a little bit more dedicated. But we've seen a solid growth in the number of passengers across the river as well.

We've seen a few issues out of Launceston with people booking to come to Hobart and then not arriving to take the bus and then people were not being able to get on the bus. Kinetic worked with State Growth to keep an allocation of at least four seats there, plus a couple for people who might have to travel for medical reasons, so that even if people do the dodgy and ring up and book then don't show up, there is still the capacity to put people on there to make sure they transport.

Myself personally, but not based on anything else, if we get to 50 or 60 per cent growth over the coming months on those numbers, it will certainly justify what we are trying to achieve as a cost-of-living measure, but also getting people in the long term onto public transport.

I'm not sure how many of you have had a chance to meet with the relatively new CEO, Jess Paton, out there, but she's quite remarkable with her knowledge from private, state and Brisbane Council or local government in Queensland to do with public transport. Her knowledge that she's bringing to Tasmania is quite substantial and refreshing.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Is she at Metro?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, she's is CEO of Metro. I find her quite refreshing to deal with, because she's thinking outside the box with a lot of practical knowledge and trying very much - at the moment, since 3 May when we made adjustments to the timetable to suit a more accurate timetable with the travel with the present traffic and growth of suburbs and everything like that, so it's fine-tuning on the timetable.

Metro is working with State Growth now to understand the patronage for all the different areas, whether it's from various suburbs and where it's working to and from, so they can understand what they need to add to the service to cope with it. The quicker we can get more substantial growth onto the public transport, it will allow us to make sure that we get that as accurate as we can over the next six to 12 months to cater for the potential growth.

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The other side of the things, in some the services that were cut out originally a few years ago because of the lack of drivers, we brought back a fair few of those services, but a lot of the other services didn't really have a lot of people on them, so they haven't been fully reinstated. What they are looking at doing is making sure that the routes that the buses go on now are much more deliberate, instead of being like a spider running all around the suburbs, is trying to stick to routes where people know when they get on the bus they'll have so many stops but they will be in Hobart, so that the timelines stay where people can actually have confidence that they're going to move, not express necessary, but move confidently to and from their destinations. A lot smarter, a lot better.

There's a fair bit of work that Jess is working on as a new person coming in as well as where they are with DSG and working some of these things out.

Some of the country runs are a little bit more difficult to get perfect because of the big differences in numbers. The bus operators are sort of used to that at various times and are working with State Growth.

Some of the school bus side of things with numbers on school buses, which is a separate part of the system, we get complaints every now and again. DSG, once again, has analysed through the various contractors the number of people on buses where they need to add a service because of an increase at a school or from a region in the start of the year, then reassess it and say whether it's got to be expanded or dropped off during the year.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I've got a question later on about bus stop upgrades, which probably should be asked later on. I wondered how that would assist in boosting those numbers as well, if you had more shelters?

Mr VINCENT - Having been out and looked at some of the upgrades, it's about weatherproofing. You're not going to turn it into the Taj Mahal, but certainly, the brightness, cleanness, DDA (*Disability Discrimination Act*)-compliant, is important. It's a lot of bus stops we have to work through there. We are working through that process and making them all compliant and doing survey work on the ones that we haven't done so far, to get the priorities in those areas. That's a program that's been going for a couple of years now - it will keep going.

Certainly, as you drive around now, you see a lot more people sitting in the bus stops than previously.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, I'm wondering if you can provide an update on where the Rapid Bus Transit Project is at? Specifically, the activation of the northern suburbs transit corridor element of that. I understand that that will be the first stage. When can the people of the northern suburbs finally expect to see some actual action?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, the initial plan was released, and we need to do that so that we could trigger joint funding of the business case to go to Infrastructure Australia. I will ask the deputy secretary to expand on where we are there.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, Minister. I'll actually pass through it. It has moved over to the delivery group with that one.

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Mr VINCENT - Sorry, I should have known that. I remember that from yesterday. Another one of Ben's projects.

Mr MOLONEY - Being a very complex and important project, my group, which is the Major Projects group, has taken on responsibility for delivering that with the guidance and working in partnership with Transport. We are obviously working from a fairly strong base in terms of the strategic business case, and it commenced a range of work with the view to be producing a detailed business case by the end of this year. It's a very challenging timeframe, so we're looking at what is appropriately achievable in that timeframe so that we can identify what commitments need to be made to move forward with that project. I guess, in relation to that, as you would have observed from the strategic business case, there are lots of different elements; it's not just a transport solution, it is related to the urban redevelopment aspects and everything else. We're working quite thoroughly through that material and advancing on that.

Ms THOMAS - The detailed business case, by the end of 2026, and just the process from there - I expect it's the detailed business case gets submitted to Infrastructure Australia and then how long is that expected to take for them to assess that, and when, minister, are you aiming for there actually to be a solution from a transit perspective, noting that I understand it's an urban renewal project more broadly, but this has been promised for over - well, probably over a decade now, I'd say, activation of this corridor. Still, we see no action. I accept it's a complex project, but do you have a timeframe in sight for when you think there'll be a solution on that corridor?

Mr VINCENT - No, I haven't. I'd seek a little bit more guidance on timeframes because it is a process that we need to work through with the federal government or Infrastructure Australia. They are aware of the project, they have been kept up to date with the project. They are also committed to the Greater Hobart transport plan and are always kept up to date as that works through. But I have no idea on the timeline at this stage because - dangerous if I did give a date that wasn't going to fit in with where the federal government might come back with assistance on that.

Mr MOLONEY - With the project, as part of the package of work that we're doing at the moment, we are looking to implement some no-regress work, which will improve access to the inner-city cycleway. We're working through that at the moment. We're envisaging that maybe somewhere between \$2 and \$3 million worth of investment just to improve access to there, and that will be no-regress work regardless of whether the business case is successful in submission to Infrastructure Australia and the Australian Government. Certainly, we're targeting submission of the business case to Infrastructure Australia and the Australian Government in 2027.

It's too early to say the timeframes, but we're very mindful of the need to, ideally, secure a commitment to commence with initiating works that would be necessary. That's our focus because of the complexity and there's so many layers to it. We're, at this stage, not anticipating a comprehensive sign-off of full investment of all aspects immediately, but rather a staged approach so that we can commence with making commitments that keep us moving forward, while we can provide further evidence that's likely to be required for such a significant investment.

Ms THOMAS - The state government and the federal government had committed funding to this specific project - the activation of the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor.

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Minister, can you assure me that that funding hasn't been re-profiled, as the term we hear is used, to another project and that that funding still remains available to be used for an actual transport solution along the corridor?

Mr VINCENT - Look, I'll seek clarification from the people around me, but there's been no discussion on that at all. It's very much committed to that as a project going forward.

Ms THOMAS - Because it used to appear specifically in the budget papers and my understanding was there used to be reference to that project, but I think it's now been wrapped up in some other line or it's described differently.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is it funded, I guess? Is it still funded?

Ms THOMAS - Well, yes. Is it? There was \$53.4 million that was designated to that specific project. Does that funding remain allocated for that purpose in the forward Estimates?

Mr VINCENT - It is my belief that it is, but I'd seek some more information on that.

Mr MOLONEY - Through you, minister. I'll actually read it to make sure I get it right. The Australian Government has provided \$40.5 million in funding for Hobart public transport infrastructure planning to support upgrades to Hobart roads, public and active transport networks, including the proposed Greater Hobart rapid bus network. The Tasmanian government is providing \$14 million in matching funds to this Australian Government commitment. These matching funds are part of the Urban Congestion Fund within the state Budget. Within this overall funding, a total budget of \$8.2 million has been allocated for the rapid bus planning and the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor for the financial year of 2023-24 through to the financial year of 2026-27. At this stage, we have \$5.7 million left to spend, so that's \$5.7 million over the forward Estimates.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. But is that \$40.5 million? That's a lot less than what has previously been quoted in terms of the amount designated to the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor. There was definitely a number in the 50s that was combining - well, I guess that we thought was combining - state and federal funding. Perhaps that's where the 14 comes in, in the state Urban Congestion Fund, but it sounds like it's a lot broader now than just the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor. Minister, is that your understanding?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I understand that it always was broadly around all the transport things we were looking at for Hobart. We sought permission and consultation with the federal government to make sure that that fund was available for the business plan to be done, which they were more than happy to have that as part of it. I'd have to seek clarification on the numbers - between the 40 and the 50 - because I don't think anybody flicking through the pages yet has an explanation, but we can certainly find out exactly for you, because I do not believe anything's been changed from what it was originally.

Ms THOMAS - I can do some more homework on that too.

Ms O'CONNOR - Bec, can I just check, just to follow up on your questions? The bid that's going into Infrastructure Australia, what exactly is that for and for how much? Because we've got some money here already allocated by the Commonwealth, some allocated by the state. What's going to be in that bid exactly?

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Mr MOLONEY - In terms of the overall business case, the intention is to be able to inform IA and the Australian Government of the overall cost of delivery of the entire northern rapid bus transit project and that will have various aspects. As I mentioned before, given the requirements of IA and infrastructure, sorry, and the Australian Government around some of these businesses cases, we feel that in the first period it is likely that we'd be asking for securing initial funding to progress while we work at gaining further information in support of the business case.

Ms O'CONNOR - Do we have an estimated whole-of-project budget?

Mr MOLONEY - We do have cost estimates that were in the strategic business case. I'm not sure whether or not those numbers were released publicly. I might need to defer to Cynthia, or -

Ms O'CONNOR - So, what we're looking for is a whole of project for the northern - the rapid bus and the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor activation. At the moment we know, off the back of Ms Thomas's questions, that there's \$54 million or so sitting there from Commonwealth and state. I just asked Mr Moloney what will be in that bid to Infrastructure Australia and it's been confirmed that there's a notional whole-of-project cost that was in some documentation, and the question is, are you able to tell us what that whole-of-project cost might be?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. Dep sec has got some of those numbers there. I think I might have even had them in the House here at one stage.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, and just for clarity in relation to, I think, the 54.5 million you were referring to. Yes, in relation to the rapid bus and the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor work, the Australian Government has provided 40.5 million in funding for Hobart public transport infrastructure planning, and the Tasmanian government has provided 14 in matching funding. The 14 million from the Tasmanian government component is part of the broader Urban Congestion Fund, which has multiple parts of that program. The process with the rapid business case would be that it would be seeking not this funding, because this is funding for delivery - sorry, for development.

CHAIR - That's right.

Ms O'CONNOR - This is what I'm trying to get to the bottom of.

Ms HEYDON - Yes, for clarity. So, what we do with the final business case is we actually submit it for construction and delivery funding. That would be the intent of that, which would be new, new funding.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right, and back to the question, with respect: what is the projected cost, the budget that is within that strategic business case that Mr Moloney referred to?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, in relation to construction or for delivery of the business case?

Mr VINCENT - No. Construction.

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Ms HEYDON - Because there's no construction money.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, so we're making an application to Infrastructure Australia for Commonwealth support to create this rapid bus network and activate the northern corridor. That will have a cost estimate attached to it. I'm just trying to understand what that cost estimate is.

Ms THOMAS - That will be provided through the detailed business case; is that right?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, that's correct.

Ms THOMAS - That level has not been done yet.

Ms O'CONNOR - It has?

Ms THOMAS - No. It hasn't.

Ms O'CONNOR - Mr Moloney said that in the -

Ms THOMAS - No. There's two elements.

Ms O'CONNOR - what, it was a draft strategic business case or -

Ms THOMAS - There's a business case for the entire, like the entire solution, and now the next stage is specific to the Northern Suburbs Transit Corridor. That's right, isn't it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Did I misunderstand you, Mr Moloney?

CHAIR - Let's let Mr Moloney perhaps clarify, or someone. Minister?

Ms O'CONNOR - That's what I'm looking for.

Ms THOMAS - Business plan on business plan on business plan.

Mr MOLONEY - I think perhaps what I can say at this stage, I think it's intended that we do the further work before we announce more accurate cost estimates. What I can say is that the appropriate cost of delivering the full rapid bus network across the three corridors is around \$900 million with ongoing operational costs, but more detailed work is required to confirm the routes and costs, including community consultation, and the project will be split over stages across 10 to 15 years, so at this stage -

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, that's good. Thank you. That's really good to understand. In our Infrastructure Australia bid, through you, minister, is it the state's plan to ask the Commonwealth to fully fund that cost? Or what would we be asking the Commonwealth for?

Mr MOLONEY - Again, I guess - through you, minister, the intention - in order to invest in the northern corridor, it needs to be considered as a broad network, so we need to have sufficient information about what we see the long-term costs are. What we were seeking to provide is more detailed, accurate information about the northern corridor and that information being sufficient for in-principle support to progress with the project and to commit initial

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investment in the activities that are necessary to keep that project moving forward and delivering the northern corridor project.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. So we may not be asking Infrastructure Australia at this stage for very much.

Mr MOLONEY - It would - I guess we're anticipating that initial investment to be quite significant. For instance, the types of matters we're looking at is: what infrastructure investments we need to make in terms of supporting infrastructure for, say, urban developments and things like that in the area; we also are doing very detailed work around the concept planning for each of the elements of the physical infrastructure necessary on the corridor, and also identifying our likely requirements in terms of - and engaging with providing the fleet that's necessary for supporting as well.

It is quite a sizeable investment, but to seek a commitment of - hypothetically, if we said a third, to seek a commitment of \$300 million, in that situation, we feel that it's likely that we will get further questions, which in the short period of time between now and Christmas we're unlikely to be able to fully answer, so what we're trying to do is secure enough money that we can continue on the critical path of the project while providing that additional information. It's not uncommon to approach the Australian Government and Infrastructure Australia in this manner for projects as complex as this, so it has been done in the past.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm not suggesting there's any issue here. I'm just trying to -

Mr VINCENT - Traditionally our funding model with the federal government has been, on all but a few, about 80:20.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. It would be the state's goal to persuade the Commonwealth to supply about 80 per cent of whatever the whole, integrated, if you like, activation costs of the three corridors, really. So that's a potential state contribution in the order of \$700 million?

Mr VINCENT - No. It would be the federal more than likely supplying 80 per cent, so ours would be round about the 200 million.

Ms O'CONNOR - I see. So if you look at the total cost, which is 900 million, 80 per cent of that's close to 700 million. Okay. All right. Thank you for that, for now.

Ms THOMAS - Can I just ask one final question on that, if you're going to move on to something else, Cassy?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I just want to know when will the consultation commence with the community? I know a key part of it was consultation on the station sites and things like that, and, importantly, what consultation will be undertaken with the Tasmanian Transport Museum in Glenorchy about the impact on their operations?

Ms O'CONNOR - Good question.

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Mr MOLONEY - Through you, minister. We're anticipating commencing consultation within the next quarter. We felt that what we really needed to do was advance from that strategic business case that we had something meaningful to consult on. We have chosen to time that in when we thought we could come back to the community with actual genuine information to consult on, and that's anticipated within the next quarter.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, so some time from July onwards? Is that what you mean by next quarter?

Mr MOLONEY - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - What about the Tasmanian Transport Museum? Have there been any conversations with them, minister, about what this might mean for them?

Mr VINCENT - No, it's been probably four months since I was out there last. But no, I have not at this point in time.

Ms THOMAS - Is it your intention to?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly through the department. I like the museum out there, so I'm sure I'll be back out there to have a chat to them about it. We do receive correspondence from them on a semi-regular basis.

Ms THOMAS - Do you expect they'll be able to continue their operations and what they do?

Mr VINCENT - I haven't looked at the detailed plans yet, or the plans that are available, to find out where those stops and what they can and can't do at this stage.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I ask a quick question about Metro buses before we move on?

CHAIR - I'm not going to move on. I've got other questions, but you can go.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks, Chair.

CHAIR - Well, I will move on, but not right now.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, on 15 April this year, I asked a question about empty school buses - I think they're called dead runs, aren't they?

CHAIR - That's a terrible term - anyway. Sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - I know, it's terrible. I know, but anyway. On their return to the depot, the example we were provided with and I asked you about was the Taroona High School bus, which makes the return -

CHAIR - Cassy, can we just put off the school bus line, if you're talking about school buses.

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Ms O'CONNOR - It's not just school buses, though. The question is more about how you utilise empty buses on the return run. But if you think it's better dealt with -

CHAIR - We can do that in the general access as well then.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sure. I'm happy to do that then.

CHAIR - Just hold that one for now, if you wouldn't mind. Now, I'm going to - the wrath of the member for Hobart - I'm going to raise an issue that doesn't quite sit.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, well, I'm not the Chair. I don't make the rules at this table.

CHAIR - But it does cover passenger transport. I'll just read the descriptor here, minister:

That support the efficient, equitable and safe movement of people, including administration,

Et cetera, but also:

To provide subsidies for students, unemployed, aged pensioners, people with disability -

And so on.

The people on King Island have a geographic disadvantage. That's the long bow, right? Minister, I know you and I have some discussions about this and I do appreciate that opportunity to have discussions with that. But recently, we saw the announcement of Rex - what are they called? Regional Express - withdraw flights to King Island. King Island is particularly reliant more and more so with big corporate farms now being the majority of agricultural endeavour, but we see tourism being critically important, particularly the golf tourism, important aspect of their economy. We know that Rex has had - I'll call them Rex as opposed to Regional Express - significant federal government funding support because it's a little bit of a bother they got themselves into.

We've seen cessation of flights between Melbourne and King Island by Sharp as well. Many of the local tourism operators over there note that a large majority of their visitors are ex Melbourne, not ex Tasmania, but we still get a good number from Tassie as well. But the number of seats that have dropped is quite significant. I think the peak seating capacity in 2025 flights between Melbourne and King Island across Sharp and Rex comprise 660 seats per week each way, and that's significantly reduced now down to 252 seats. It's a massive reduction and people have made investments over there in terms of their tourism opportunities, so it cuts across a whole heap of portfolios - I appreciate that, minister.

Can you tell us what you're willing to do and how you can assist the island here and actually, perhaps, ignore the mayor's response to that, because it didn't reflect the view of many in the community actually?

Mr VINCENT - I can say that we are having a lot of communications regarding this come in from a lot of different quarters, and still understanding some of the consequences on the numbers and where it is. We have meetings coming up to discuss how the gaps can be filled

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if there are any gaps. As you know from my conversations with you, that I am very conscious of the reliability and sustainability of the services to King and Flinders, I might say. I have been buoyed from the fact that - besides the people we've spoken to ourselves - there have been several other parties who would also like to have conversations about that.

The awkwardness for the state of Tasmania at the moment is that there is so much awkwardness with even Sharp, with Rex, with some of the independent operators even on the size of the aircraft and the type of aircraft. That is something you and I have been discussing for some time, and which leads to the financial sustainability of those flights in and out, whether it's from Melbourne or from Tasmania, and how to make viable flights of such short distances. We're very aware of that. We are working through it, and we have a lot of meetings happening at the moment, as I've said, since May.

I will read this out just to get this right, please:

Since May 2025, the government has provided temporary support to Sharp Airlines to maintain service to Flinders and King islands during the period of market uncertainty.

CHAIR - Can you provide the amount of financial support you've provided?

Mr VINCENT -

Total support provided to Sharp Airlines is now up to \$2.2 million extended through to 31 October 2026.

That was well programmed and sheer fluke, but we'll take that, thank you.

From 1 May 26, Sharp has implemented some changes to its King Island schedule, including reducing the Monday Launceston services from two to one, to reflect lower seasonal demand and ceasing Melbourne to King Island services, which was considered uncommercial.

At the same time, Sharp has introduced a new direct Launceston-King Island service operating twice weekly.

This was effectively doubling the capacity on those days by enabling a dedicated King Island-Burnie service to run concurrently.

Sharp has reported a strong and positive response to this revisited schedule.

Following the announcement of the withdrawal of Rex from the Burnie-King Island route, we are working with Sharp to assess demand and where the changes in services are required to accommodate additional passengers.

There's some work happening with DSG on that, but we know there's another extra body of work.

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CHAIR - I appreciate that is from mainland Tasmania. I know that is your core interest, obviously, but the majority of their tourism numbers come from Melbourne. Now we've got Sharp not doing that. Rex not doing that.

Is that part of your consideration as well?

Mr VINCENT - Our priority is obviously out of Tasmania, but we do fully understand the importance of Melbourne to both islands. I wouldn't like to pre-empt the conversations I'll be having over the next few weeks, but that is also part of our consideration.

Quite rightly, it's just been pointed out to me, there's a little bit of crossover here with the Minister of Tourism who does organise some of those flights from Melbourne through.

My chief does have regular conversations with the Minister for Tourism's office regarding making sure the information flow is correct between both of us.

CHAIR - It is a really serious concern for those who have made significant investment on the island, not just golf tourism, but other tourism as well.

Mr VINCENT - Very much so. I understand the golf tourism is probably a little bit flat at the moment, but as we know that chops and changes. But the long-term stability for the locals and growing the economies on both those islands is very much around making sure shipping and air freight is of a sustainable and continual and reliable basis. That is where I'm coming from with several of my ministries to support both the communities, including Cape Barren, I should say, with reliable services.

CHAIR - Has anyone got anything else on passenger transport?

Ms THOMAS - I do. It's about the TT-Line services. Can I ask that here, or not?

CHAIR - Try me.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. I've been advised that TT-Line has chosen to stop all ferry services from the 23 to 30 October in order to change over to the new *Spirits*. Minister, is that correct? Representations from local community members are concerned that this is the week before the Deloraine Craft Fair, which is a very large craft fair, and this could reduce tourists to Tasmania for this significant event and have other impacts, obviously, if people can't come in and out for that week to Tasmania in the *Spirits*.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, that is correct that has been the process and I have some notes here which I will read in a couple of secs. We're trying to minimise the changeover period of adapting from the old ships to the new ships and to minimise that to a lower number of days. I will read the information on where the communications happened in a couple secs, thanks, just so I get that spot-on.

This year, the *Spirit of Tasmania* has reserved space for vehicles and cabins for passengers travelling under the Tasmanian Craft Fair Special Events page on the final scheduled sailing from Geelong prior to the commencement of the Tasmanian Craft Fair. This sailing was scheduled for 22 October. For participants who have booked via the Tasmanian Craft Fair Special Events page for this sailing, they will be notified if and when any sailings

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are reinstated during the blocked-out period and they may choose to rebook on a later sailing date closer to the commencement of the Tasmanian Craft Fair, so they're in contact with the people who are booking through this page because it is a special events page they have for it.

I am also advised that Tracey Mallett, the CEO of Visit Northern Tasmania, has offered to assist the Tasmanian Craft Fair team to develop accommodation package offers to stall holders who may arrive in Tasmania earlier than they normally would, ahead of the fair.

Ms THOMAS - While we're in a bit of a lull, can I also ask for an update on the River Derwent Ferry service expansion? Where is that at, particularly in relation to the new terminals?

Ms O'CONNOR - Have we moved into the next Output 6.1?

Ms THOMAS - No, it's not a subsidy though, shipping and ferry subsidies. We're still in 2.3.

Mr VINCENT - Ferry services sit with council's operation at the moment -

Ms THOMAS - The terminals?

Mr VINCENT - The terminals do, yes.

I think you had some information on the contract regarding Bellerive one yesterday that might be relevant here.

Ms HEYDON - Yes, through you, minister, as the minister mentioned, there are three new terminals being delivered by Greater Hobart through, let's say, a funding arrangement with the federal government which we're not party to but we do engage with them on theirs. We are delivering an upgrade at Bellerive terminal, which is underway. The funding is actually across two areas. The capital funding for Bellerive is in capital. The funding for running the service is in I think the 1.3 you mentioned that's for the running of the current service. We're also planning at the moment for the future expansion of the Derwent Ferry network when the other terminals come online and what their procurement options are for that going forward as well.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. When is the expected date? My concern is more about whether the Budget factors in increased operating costs for the extension of the ferry services when new terminals come online. So, what date is that expected to occur, that there are new services in operation, I guess, when these new terminals are constructed?

Ms HEYDON - We're working with the councils and we understand it's probably not until some time in calendar year 2028 that new terminals will be open.

Ms THOMAS - Is there any funding in the Budget forward Estimates for 2028-29, 2029-30, for operation of extended services, if those new terminals are up and running, and there are new services in place?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, there is, I would say, dedicated funding within the passenger transport line item. But, part of what we need to be doing is actually developing the procurement and design of the new services, which will inform what that looks like - if that

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can be managed within the allocations we have, or if it requires additional funding, we will go back to government. So, we haven't landed on the actual -

Ms THOMAS - Cost yet.

Ms HEYDON - timetable and service pattern, yet.

Ms O'CONNOR - Just a quick question on the Metro shop, if possible. I know members have been briefed on it, but there's, obviously, there's a plan for the Metro shop to be closed. Does the minister have any information to share on how that will impact staff working at the Metro shop? Is there a plan to deploy those staff within Metro or within the agency?

Mr VINCENT - Well, that is something I'm working through with the consultation period at the moment. It's very much still in the hands of operational matters with Metro, so I haven't had those full discussions, at this point in time, with the CEO or the board.

Ms THOMAS - Can I ask -

Mr VINCENT - Sorry, I'll just add to that; it's passed on to me that they are looking to utilise the staff within Metro itself.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you.

Ms THOMAS - On Metro, I know we talked about the free bus service earlier and, whilst I support this, Tasmanians are doing it tough, they're -

CHAIR - We might do that under general access -

Ms THOMAS - Oh, okay, sure.

CHAIR - We're just about to go there, that's alright. Yes?

Ms THOMAS - Yes.

Output Group 6 - Subsidies and Concessions

6.1 Shipping and Ferry Subsidies

CHAIR - This is a provision to ensure that they do keep going, ostensibly, but minister, I just note that the appropriation is pretty steady; it always is this amount put in, but last year, the budget appropriation was \$1.3 million, and then the expenses were budgeted at 1.8, and the estimated outcome is 1.8. Why the difference there, how, you appropriate a certain amount, but where's the rest of the expenditure come from in this?

Mr VINCENT - I just have to seek a little bit of guidance from the dep sec on that, so bringing it up, won't be a sec, thanks.

Ms HEYDON - So, your query was in relation to the expenditure last year?

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CHAIR - The expenditure, yes. I just, I'm interested in why it's different from the appropriated budget, where's the extra money come? It's not a huge amount, but, I'm just, there must be some additional money come in, but where from? That you spend.

Ms HEYDON - Not yet, no. I'm fairly certain it was in relation to additional King Island funding, but just give me a moment, I'll double check, why we had a high spend.

I've been told we rolled over money that doesn't show in the first table.

CHAIR - Oh, right. If that's the case, you've rolled over money into that, so then where does that go if it's not spent? The expenses drop away again so, does the money just get reabsorbed back into the public account?

Ms HEYDON - I've been advised it was a rollover and only applies for one year, we can't continue to roll it over. This output, the funding, essentially covers, where are we - the shipping and ferry subsidies covers Bruny Island ferry services, just under 1 million, the Furneaux Islands shipping contingency fund, which is just under 300, and the King Island shipping contingency fund, which is 49,000.

CHAIR - So, how much of those, the contingency, was actually funded, was expended? Are you giving the numbers expended?

Ms HEYDON - Yes. So, that's the allocations. I will have to get a breakdown of the actual expenditure against each of those allocations.

CHAIR - Sure.

Ms HEYDON - And now we've got them, sorry. This is only till March 2026, though. So, total expenditure till March 2026 is 607,537, of which 460,000 is the base subsidy payment for Bruny Island services. Under the Furneaux Island shipping contingency fund up till the end of March where total expenditure was actually 153.711.

CHAIR - Dollars?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, thousand dollars.

CHAIR - Thousand dollars?

Ms HEYDON - Sorry, \$153,711.54. That included -

CHAIR - That was the fuel excise?

Ms HEYDON - Of that expenditure, that included funding support for Bass Strait Freight to deliver Cape Barren Island shipping service, which is - as it's not commercially viable. That was 54,000 within that. There was also funding for dredging of Bridport Channel to enable Bass Strait freight of \$67,250; transport shipping costs for road maintenance machinery to Cape Barren, which was \$16,938.

Mr VINCENT - Water tanks.

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Ms HEYDON - Yes, it was the water tanks. Transport shipping costs of water storage tanks to barren island which was \$9003.

Mr VINCENT - Cape Barren, yep.

Ms HEYDON - Yes. We also funded repairs to refrigerated shipping containers used to transport fresh and frozen groceries to the island, which was \$6152.

CHAIR - And there was no expenditure on subsidising King Island this year?

Ms HEYDON - As at 31 March 2026, no funding from the King Island shipping contingency has been used yet.

CHAIR - Are you aware of it being used since? I thought the John Duigan had a little bit of an incident in the port, up against their wharf.

Mr VINCENT - Not that I'm aware of, but let me check.

CHAIR - And it was out of service for a short period. I don't know how long ago now, I can't remember.

Mr VINCENT - Did it have a breakdown of a thruster just outside the port? If it was just straightforward, because it's an operation of TasPorts, I wouldn't be aware of that because it's operated by TasPorts, but we were informed about a -

CHAIR - Breakdown?

Mr VINCENT - breakdown, a part that needed to be replaced. It was flown in too, but that's the only one I'm aware of at this stage.

CHAIR - But then in any event, up until March, there's been no funding paid out of that for King Island?

Ms HEYDON - Not against the Bass, no.

Mr VINCENT - Not out of that. I think there was an allocation there, but see if we can get -

CHAIR - Okay. Did you want to ask about Bruny Island?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes, I did.

CHAIR - You've got the figures.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes. The residents of Bruny Island are really after a dedicated parking on the ferry. Have you looked into that at all?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, and we're continuing discussions. I was down there a couple of months ago, I can't remember exactly, and for the first time to actually sit and talk with Simon and understand. I think I did give an answer to a question in the lower House about how quick

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the vessels were with the clean hull and everything. It was interesting to understand the maintenance, and the speed and fuel savings of the ships; but it was also interesting to talk to Simon about the infrastructure needs and the plan that State Growth, we believe in the next 12 months, will work down there to develop the next stage of parking on both sides, or what is required; but they did talk about the awkwardness of when the service started, about having a booking system in place and that a lot of people didn't want it.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes.

Mr VINCENT - The thought pattern has changed a bit from the operators to say there are ways of being able to do that to operate a smoother system now, and put some dedicated space there for the locals at the same time.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Just one or two, they suggest.

Mr VINCENT - And they are working through some of those thought patterns to present to DSG, which I have not seen yet, but that was part of the discussion. I think that's been a part of the discussion with a lot of the locals because a few phone calls I've received myself from some of the locals on the island that I've dealt with for a lot of years through business have indicated the same sort of thing. It is part of the discussions.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Minister, did you meet with the reference group or just with the ferry operator?

Mr VINCENT - No, I just had time to meet with the ferry operator at the time.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Will you meet with the reference group?

Mr VINCENT - I am happy to meet with them all. I've been talking with some of the other local politicians from down that area that - certainly one of them, and some of the other operators in the area. We've got meetings scheduled for some time in the next few weeks and that will continue.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Sorry for jumping in - what's part of stage 2?

Mr VINCENT - For some time now, they've wanted to do a structure plan for down there for both sides to control the parking, the amenities on the Kettering side, of course, some of the overflow potential because it's not as easy as just parking on the side of the highway or the road, so we have to think of things differently there. Part of that way of getting people on and off the ship is certainly an important part of it.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - So you're aware of the issues over peak season -

Mr VINCENT - Very much so.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - with the traffic lining up on the Channel Highway?

Mr VINCENT - We haven't seen as much of that this year. We've been -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes, we have. I can show you some pictures.

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Mr VINCENT - We get the pictures sent to us each time, and there are cameras down there, so we are very much part of those discussions and the management of time. That information does flow in pretty well to us. I will ask the dep sec for any other update other than the generalisations that I've done.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, in relation to parking and impact on roads, we are aware and we are looking at what those options are. Potentially if people are seeking to get onto one, they don't have to turn up quite so early or how we can automate that, so we're working through that and looking at that with the operator. In relation to dedicated space, at this stage, we do have dedicated space for emergencies, water and other essentials. We have previously looked at dedicating space. Initial assessment is it would require additional ships, because if you always dedicate that, that will actually limit the capacity which will have potential cost options as well. We haven't formalised anything and I haven't seen anything come through to myself from the ferry operator, but we would then do an assessment and provide advice through to government on what that would look like if there was a desire or intent to do that. There is likely to be a capacity and cost impact in that which we would need to break down.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Why would it change capacity, because it's the same number of cars, it's just on each ferry you're setting aside two cars to be residents?

Ms HEYDON - If they don't get used, for example, if we always have to leave them available, et cetera.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - If they don't get used, you can fill them with - yes.

Ms HEYDON - Potentially. So we've got to actually work through how that could be done in practice. Previously, the operator has suggested there is a higher cost in relation to that, but we will have to wade through - but we have not been presented with anything in that space.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I don't understand what the cost would be. It's just -

CHAIR - Making the system work, you know how hard it is with HRIS.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I heard you say that you're happy to meet with the reference group, minister.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, we are.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Great. Thank you.

CHAIR - Any other questions on that line item? Otherwise, we will move to 6.2 with general access. Over to you, Sarah.

Output Group 6 - Subsidies and Concessions

6.2 General Access Services

Ms LOVELL - Minister, last year in this hearing we had a conversation about the common ticketing funding, and you said at that stage that you expected that to be rolled into your funding line item in this Budget; has that occurred?

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Mr VINCENT - The amounts are still in there at this stage, although the progress of common ticketing has paused at this stage, due to the free bus travel, and that gives us time to re-evaluate the whole system, also looking at what data we still need, because there's many parts of the common ticketing system beyond what you charge to get on and off the bus. There is a lot of other information that we are trying to captivate so we can operate better services, like from what suburbs, how many, destinations, times, everything like that. That is still live and being worked through. I will ask the dep sec for an update where they're at, because we've had trial runs also with the ticketing with, I think, Tassielink and the ferry services. I will let Cynthia expand on that a little bit more for you.

Ms HEYDON - Thank you, through you, minister, the common ticketing program actually has a couple of items within it: there's the ticketing system, which is through Cubic. There is within that as well - sorry, separate to Cubic, within the program, there's also a system or software called HASTUS, which is used for planning as well as operations. We have been funding HASTUS. Metro is also developing up HASTUS, so it'll actually improve both our planning and operations on the Metro side of things. The other element in there is the real-time tracking that came live at the end of 2024. That, again, is part of the funding that is, let's say, broader common ticketing as opposed to just the ticketing system itself.

Further to the minister's advice, as we are under free-fare arrangements at the moment, we continue to work with the supplier of our ticketing system, but we are also developing up fare policy options for government's consideration and identifying the technology that's required for any of those fare options as well within the ticketing system. For example, there are usually other operational elements that it does, as opposed to just ticketing, which is used by operators for information from the buses, but also information that we use as well, so it's on us to provide some advice to the government of what potentially beyond the end of June looks like next year.

Ms LOVELL - Can I confirm also - does that funding now sit in this line item, is that right?

Ms HEYDON - It is -

Ms LOVELL - 6.2.

Ms HEYDON - It is in 2.3. It had previously been sitting in the Digital Transformation Project which was under Finance General.

Ms LOVELL - So, it has now gone into 2.3?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, it's now in 2.3.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. I know we've moved off 2.3, can I ask how much funding is allocated to this project in that line item? Can we go back to it?

Ms HEYDON - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, the project has been abandoned, effectively.

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Ms LOVELL - It's been (inaudible) we're here which is where we talked about it last year which is why -

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Can you give us a breakdown of the funding that's allocated?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, we have for the pure project costs \$5.209 million in the 2026-27 Budget and then for the other ticketing passenger transport systems, we have \$4.66 million.

Ms LOVELL - Is the \$4.66 million in the same year?

Ms HEYDON - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - And beyond 2026-27 is there funding allocated?

Ms HEYDON - There is \$3.9 million in relation to the project costs in 2027-28 and \$4.6 million in 2027-28 for the ticketing passenger transport system element.

Ms LOVELL - And then anything beyond that?

Ms HEYDON - No, that would be turning into general, as it's the end of a project.

Ms LOVELL - Can you tell us how much has been spent on the project to date?

Ms HEYDON - I can if you can bear with me a moment?

Ms LOVELL - Of course.

Ms HEYDON - The \$35.7 million which is the full program for common ticketing - I'll just give you a quick breakdown of the different elements: \$20 million is in relation to the Qubit contract for design and build of a ticketing system; \$10.2 million is essentially project costs and enabling projects including HASTUS which is the planning tool and real time tracking system; \$4.6 million is contingency. As at the end of March 2026, we spent just under \$11 million on the Qubit contract, and a further \$7.1 million has been incurred across the common ticketing program, which includes reimbursement of costs for Metro when they had started that project, so roughly, I think it's about \$1.8 million of the previous expenditure of Metro.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. The free transport policies in place until the end of June next year, are you anticipating that this system will be ready to go after that?

Mr VINCENT - That's what we're working through to see whether the free ticketing system continues. There's a lot of work to do on modelling for that and we'll be working through that over the next 6 to 12 months.

Ms LOVELL - There's been a lot of money spent on a project that may or may not end up -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's delivered nothing.

Ms LOVELL - Well, so far, and maybe never.

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Mr VINCENT - We fully understand, but as you can imagine it's still early days with the transport system under the free ticketing, so we have some issues to work through there to make sure that everything continues how many would like but we'll work through it in as quick a time-frame as possible.

Ms LOVELL - If I can perhaps put it in a different way: if the government choose to stop the free public transport after 30 June when it's currently committed to, will this system be in place, ready to go?

Mr VINCENT - I haven't got that projection yet, but Cynthia might be more across that than I am.

Ms O'CONNOR - Short answer is surely: No.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, Minister. Yes, we've actually had a successful trial on the ferry systems. I don't know if anyone had a chance to use it while it was on. So, it is installed in there and we are working on the schedule for the full rollout with operators around their requirements as well. But again, it will come down to what the fair policy looks like in the system and the operations that support that.

CHAIR - Cassy, do you have questions in this one? Metro?

Ms LOVELL - You had one from before that you wanted to ask.

Ms O'CONNOR - School buses?

CHAIR - No, Metro. But school buses is next.

Ms LOVELL - Dead runs - or whatever you called them.

Ms O'CONNOR - School buses are next. No, I'm happy to wait until we get into school buses.

CHAIR - Wasn't there a Metro one you wanted to ask?

Ms O'CONNOR - I did ask someone about the Metro Shop and then I just wanted to ask about empty buses.

CHAIR - I'll just come back to you.

Ms THOMAS - I just wanted to know - on the free buses. Minister, whilst I said before the cost of living is hitting people hard, and I appreciate the intent of the free bus service and the relief it provides for Tasmanians, but, as we know, nothing comes for free. So, what does the free bus service cost the government each month or each week? Do you have a figure of what it actually costs the Tasmanian taxpayer? I remember this discussion often at councils on open tip days and that they weren't free, they cost the ratepayers - similar sort of thing.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, still costs somebody money. Roughly \$1.7 million a month - I could hear the wheels turning on my chief next door to me working that out. There is some cost advantage that we have to look at with those sort of things. This is very much from a layman

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minister's point of view, but it's been quite noticeable on the traffic report that we receive morning and night, the smoothing out of the lack of congestion. It's usually when there's only an accident or some major event or storm event that you see the congestion happen now - something out of the ordinary. Where before, you always knew you were going to have a certain amount of congestion. It still happens on some days, but it has been quite noticeable that the traffic flows have smoothed out. We're able to measure some things like that as a cost advantage of the public transport. That's just where my head's been going lately, on the things that I've noticed that make a difference.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's really good.

Mr VINCENT - Just trying to think about it as differently as I -

Ms THOMAS - Yes. And luckily, if the traffic is held up, we've got those gigantic big sign boards to tell us.

Mr VINCENT - We do have, and I can't wait to get back out to that room that I've talked so passionately about in this room before, to see what else that's doing with those boards.

Ms THOMAS - Good. Some advertising or revenue raising.

Mr VINCENT - If they let me at the control panel I might send you a message one day on one of the boards.

Ms THOMAS - That'd be great. I'd really appreciate that.

CHAIR - When it's her birthday. I think there definitely be one Bec's birthday.

Ms THOMAS - Christmas Eve's my birthday.

Mr VINCENT - Especially here for Bec.

CHAIR - Cassy did you like have that question or are you all done?

Ms O'CONNOR - No, I'm just happy to wait until we get to the next output, which is school buses.

Output Group 6 - Subsidies and Concessions

6.3 School Bus Services

Ms LOVELL - I only have a couple on this one, so then we'll go to Cassy. Minister, speaking of terrible terms in this field, we talked last year about -

Mr VINCENT - Don't say it.

Ms LOVELL - I have to say it - crush capacity. At last year's hearing, you took some questions on notice, which I appreciated, and came back with some answers that we then followed up a little further in the report back in the Chamber. What came out of those - I had it here, now I've restarted my computer, so I don't have it in front of me again. I'll have to go by memory - but from memory, the response was that there's the term 'crush capacity', which

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there's a definition for. The definition when it came to school buses and school children included a provision for basically an extra capacity for children under the age of 10.

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - It was three to a seat, I believe it was, if they were 10 or under or under 10 - one of the two. The question I asked in the follow-up in the Chamber was: how do we know - you've got buses that are picking up children from high school and primary school, but even just with the primary school-only bus, obviously there will be children over the age of 10 - presuming nobody's checking their age as they get on the bus and where they're sitting, how we monitoring to make sure that school buses are not exceeding that capacity limit when the definition is difficult to police?

Mr VINCENT - Very good question and something that's been talked about a lot, also from the Education minister's point of view. We do receive information from a lot of the operators, which are family operators. I bet you they can just about tell you the birthday of most of the kids on the bus, too.

Ms LOVELL - They probably could actually, yes.

Mr VINCENT - Amazing people in amongst that system. It is something that is monitored on a regular basis. There has been a review and I will read this part of it out so I do get it correct, please. Over the past 6-12 months there have been some instances where parents, schools have reported school buses being overcrowded. The department has followed up on these reports and has not found evidence of school buses operating above carrying capacity.

In response to issues raised about potential overcrowding school services, I have asked the department to undertake a review to validate patronage numbers and consider appropriate actions as required. The department will work with DECYP and bus operators and engage an independent, external organisation to review student numbers. This review will target bus routes and schools that have been subject to overcrowding complaints in the first instance and the department will work closely with operators, DECYP and TasBus. This review will commence towards the end of term two 2026, in consultation with DECYP, and I am expecting an update in late July.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Further to that, in part of the response last year, there was a requirement for bus operators to report overcrowding. I think, is it if they're at 90 per cent of the capacity or over 90 per cent? Can you just confirm what that requirement is and also how many, if any, reports of reaching that threshold have been received in the last 12 months?

Mr VINCENT - I'll ask the dep sec who's quickly bringing that up, I think.

Ms HEYDON - I won't have the figure in relation to any reports. I'm not sure on that number, but I'll ask if we can get that through while we're in session and just refer back through to the 90 per cent because it is sort of specific around how long that - it's not sort of 90 per cent on one-off, it's 90 per cent on rolling, consecutive days. I will have to - give me a moment and I will find that.

Ms LOVELL - That's fine, no problem at all.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Sarah. Well, this is the other side of the equation. Once the overcrowded buses arrive at schools, they are going back to the depot empty. We had a discussion in this place during a sitting last month when I did ask a question about empty school buses on their return to the depot, and you said in your response,

It is something that I personally haven't seen a lot of information on, but I do know the new CEO of Metro and other bus operators are very conscious with State Growth of dead running time. To bring efficiency about, we have to make it a lot more deliberate. Going to schools is a very deliberate run. Coming from that way may open up other opportunities now as we try to make those runs and the use of the buses more economical and efficient. If there's any more information I need to add after speaking with the CEO, I'll clarify that with you.

I'm just wondering, minister, if there's any more information you have to add?

Mr VINCENT - There isn't at this stage other than as part of the body of work that the CEO is doing at the moment in relation to Metro on how they can minimise their debt running. They also have that with some of the peak times, not just for school, but also getting people in the morning and out. Having a couple of relations and several other people I know who are bus drivers for Metro these days, they do tell me that their contracts as drivers do have splits in them for those areas. But, the more we can maximise - and that's hard sometimes, where the buses finish and where they need to be to take up the next lot, so there is a bit of dead running involved. I've got no real deliberate further information on that. It's a bit different with the regional operators because they operate with a lot of people who use it as a part-time job. Some take the bus home, or if they live in certain places it cuts down and minimises the empty running spaces on that. I have got meetings coming up with a few of the bus operators, which I will find out a little bit more on how they do utilise that or whether they just take it as part of what they need to do in regional areas. I will ask the dep sec for any other information she has.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, I think the opportunity in relation to utilising non-revenue services - which is what we tend to call them as opposed to dead running - we're not against looking at where there might be opportunity. It might be a little bit different, as the minister said, for some of our school bus operators who are predominantly just operating a school bus -

Ms O'CONNOR - That would be the rural and regional?

Ms HEYDON - Yes. I have not had any discussions with our general access operators in that space, but we're open to conversations if there is an opportunity. It might be also just informed by essentially the driver requirements to deliver on general access or potentially maintenance requirements, I don't know, but we can have those conversations with our bus operators -

Ms O'CONNOR - So it could be a contractual thing with those private operators?

Ms HEYDON - It might be a contractual thing.

Ms O'CONNOR - Those contracts were sort of re-signed weren't they, sort of four or five years ago now, so they've got a little way to go?

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Ms HEYDON – yeah, through to June 2029, and it might also depend on their shift arrangements as well, so I couldn't give you a blanket answer around all of it.

In relation to the 90 per cent, I can give you some advice on that requirement and it is actually an offence not to advise us under the contract. If a bus reaches 90 per cent of its operational capacity or 100 per cent of its seated capacity for three consecutive trips, it must be reported to us or it's an offence under the regulations. I'm waiting for an update to see if we've had it reported.

Mr VINCENT - I'll just add to that a little bit, it just popped into my head. With Metro, some of that quiet time running during the peaks is when they do their fuel up, their cleaning, they have a contractor come into the Metro depots to do that, so the bus returns there and goes through some of the maintenance process, which is refuelling, cleaning and mechanical, so they utilise every part of the day that way.

Ms O'CONNOR - One of the worrying trends in Metro buses, particularly in recent years, has been an increase in violent incidents. It's led to situations, as I understand it after talking to previous CEOs of Metro, where drivers have been fearful, where people have decided it's probably just not worth being a Metro driver because it's such a stressful job, and it is a stressful job, you know, huge responsibilities are placed on Metro drivers to look after people's lives and children and, you know, it would be a hard job.

Have the free bus fares had any positive impact or has it changed in any way, that trend that we've been seeing on buses in recent years, that worrying trend?

Mr VINCENT - Was that a DD, was it?

Ms O'CONNOR - I mean, look, who's to say?

Mr VINCENT - It's a very good question because it has been raised both at the driver level. We have noticed an improvement because of the number of people on the buses, so there is a greater, what we call a peer-group pressure towards better behaviour on the bus because there're more people on the bus, so not quite as easy to get away with things.

Drivers - it's very interesting going out talking in the drivers' room out there. A lot of them don't like the security screens that are now on all buses because it is a barrier to talking to everybody. Some of the older drivers, I mean one that I was speaking to a few months ago has retired two or three times. He keeps coming back because he misses it, which is just lovely, so obviously a career bus driver. He talks passionately about talking to everybody and how some of the old-fashioned techniques of a senior person are able to deescalate some of the issues on the buses versus some of the newer people doing the role. Fascinating to talk to people with that sort of level of experience.

Certainly, the drivers are protected very well with the screens that are in now, but it's interesting that not all of them want the screens there. The other part of the behavioural side of things is the new CCTVs going in over the next - I think it will be rolled out by the end of this year. I stand to be corrected on the exact month, but we're installing them into all 217 buses that we have in Metro, and it's the number of cameras also, so it's there for a safety reason, for people getting on and off the bus. It's also there for identification reasons. It can also help us

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with our counting of the passengers at the moment, until we have another system in place; but it also has the ability for the driver to put that straight through to - it's, as far as I know, a live feed, but it's not watched, so if you have a problem, you just hit a button and it activates back at Metro, so that they can activate. So, I believe, from everything I've seen with that, and my personal knowledge of these sorts of systems that I've built up over the years, is that that will be another huge deterrent from some of the behavioural issues, because people will be identified very quickly, and Metro will be, on behalf of the driver, back from the depot, be able to relate to the police, or transit officers, or whoever they need to, it might be a medical emergency, very quickly and have evidence there.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. So, two questions arise out of that: so you, you've funded, right, anecdotally what we're saying here is potentially a lowering of violent incidents, because of increased patronage; is that correct?

Mr VINCENT - I think that's fair to say at this point in time.

Ms HEYDON - Yes, yes. Through you, minister, it's - I don't think we have a completely black and white answer.

Ms O'CONNOR - No.

Ms HEYDON - It's something we're interested in looking at. What we do understand from other jurisdictions where there's been a - either a free-fare initiative, or reduced fares, what you can see is actually the disruptive behaviour that's in relation to fares is now taken out. So, we will be looking and seeing, you know, obviously with transit officers, that would be one of the things we expect to see less engagement on, because that's not a - you know, potential escalating event, that we're still to work through what that, you know, what we're actually seeing and what we can trace back to.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, poverty is very stressful. It raises people's cortisol levels, but the second part of that question was relating to the cameras that are going into the buses. Presumably they're not facial recognition tech cameras, are they?

Mr VINCENT - Just normal CCTV -

Ms O'CONNOR - Normal monitoring CCTV cameras. Thank you.

Mr VINCENT - Some of the external ones on that, create a great opportunity for safety around the buses too, which is also in relation to a lot of elderly and young people that, where accidents happen, so, yes, it's potentially a very, very good thing for us all around.

Ms THOMAS - Can I ask further on that, minister: previously I've raised, in Estimates and through other mechanisms, the question of what's happening with transit officers on buses, and I'm wondering if you've got any further update on the transit officers being provided with further powers, and declared officially as transit officers, yet?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, just check with the dep sec. I believe the training course is now being put together for that next step of the transit officers being qualified, but we will just ask for a bit of clarification on that, please.

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Ms HEYDON - Yes, through you minister: yes, you're right, there is a requirement, where we've been working on the potential expansion of the transit officers, with a framework and a training package. Part of what's also required is the powers of the transit officers need to be detailed in the passenger transport service regulations, and to access these powers, these officers must be authorised by the Transport Commissioner. The powers that will be part of an authorised officer at the moment do relate to powers in relation to fares; powers to require movement within vehicle; power to require name and address; power to direct cessation of behaviour; power to direct in general; power to direct to leave; exercise power subject to safety; and use and return of evidence. We're just pulling together, essentially, that sort of final package, and what a future procurement looks like, as opposed to the arrangements we've had in place, which I will say is essentially a trial, but to look to actually procure an ongoing transit officer arrangement that can be applied statewide.

Ms THOMAS - So, minister, why is it taken so long, because I just keep hearing, like it seems like over the last two years, that there's got to be a training package developed, now there's got to be procurement, there's got to be further procurement; this was a commitment that was given, I think, back in 2024 - I was just trying to find the most recent question and answer I asked on the floor on this. It just seems to be taking forever to actually - the government is paying for security on Metro buses, which yes, might be having an impact, but the intention always was that they'd be equipped with the powers necessary to actually keep people safer on buses. It just seems to be taking forever and I cannot for the life of me understand why.

Mr VINCENT - Sure, I haven't got an easy answer to that, but I will ask the dep sec if there is more information on the timeline.

Ms HEYDON - I can't talk to the broader timeline. I can confirm that the authorisation framework for the transit officers has been approved by me, as the Transport Commissioner, and the training package is essentially signed off, so now it's on us to procure, to put together the procurement for a - let's say, a long-term service contract for this, as opposed to the arrangement that we currently have in place that don't have these powers.

Mr VINCENT - We will have to go tender?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, we will have to go to tender.

Ms THOMAS - We've already got a security company engaged, so what are we exactly procuring? What's the government actually seeking to procure that will be different?

Ms HEYDON - A long-term service contract. That has not been a long-term service contract. This would be beyond the, let's say, annual arrangement and will actually be under the new frameworks, so they must demonstrate their suitability under that framework, and that all the proposed officers will have to meet those requirements as well.

Ms THOMAS - So, what has been the reason why it's taken so long, minister? Why has it taken so long to get to this point?

Mr VINCENT - I'm not familiar with the timeline or the process of doing the procurement and the training, so I just take that on notice.

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Ms THOMAS - I can ask you again on the floor.

Grants and Subsidies

CHAIR - Minister, the conveyance allowance fits under this, which assists students from the very beautiful part of my electorate, King Island, to attend school. How much has been expended to date in this financial year compared to the last financial year?

Mr VINCENT - Dep sec, I will let you go on it.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, as at March 2026, expenditure is 0.33 million.

CHAIR - And how does it compare with last year?

Ms HEYDON - I don't have what we were for March last year, but the 2024-25 spend was 0.78 million all up for that financial year.

CHAIR - So, that will just meet the need, won't it? Like, it's not - no one's excluded from accessing that?

Ms HEYDON - No. And because it can, you know, potentially be variable depending on the number of school children and travel, we have had it see a slight increase from 2023-24, but I'm not quite sure what we will forecast because we will still have requests and submissions coming in.

CHAIR - I reckon the taxi fares went up when the Cam River Bridge issue happened, and had to get from the airport to the schools. Hellyer College, places like that, it would have taken two hours of taxi fare. That would have added to your bill, anyway. Any other questions on grants and subsidies? No? We will move then to capital investment. I know you had some questions here, Clare.

Capital Investment Program

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I can start off. The Cygnet township safety upgrades. Could you please provide an update of the status of this project and how much the Huon Valley will receive in funding to deliver the project?

Mr VINCENT - I will just seek a little bit more information on that, but we had been corresponding with council for quite some time on that about reallocation of the priority of some of those projects, so it worked in okay. They did the right thing in making sure that they tick the boxes with State Growth, so there was no arguments about where that contract was and what it covered. The process was good from their part in the communication, good from their offices.

Ms HEYDON - Sorry, through you, minister, I don't have the status of the works. I do know we agreed with the request from the Houn council for a change to the proposed scope of works and have signed up on a new deed. There is obviously milestones attached to the release of those fundings, but I will request if we can get some advice back in session just as to the status and what we've been advised from council, but we were supportive of the proposed changes from council and the minister signed off on those changes as well.

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Mr VINCENT - The full project was with council, wasn't it? So, we wouldn't have exact details.

Ms HEYDON - Yes, it's council delivering it. We're providing the funding.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - And has that been reduced because they had different priorities?

Ms HEYDON - I will have to check. I know that I think their original scope was unable to be delivered within the funding that they were allocated. I think that they've looked to deliver within the funding that was there, but I'll come back and confirm.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Okay, thank you. The Algona interchange - what is the anticipated timeframe for completion for that one?

Mr VINCENT - While Cynthia's finding a little bit more detail there, I have got some notes here on the detailed design of the upgrade works was completed April 2025. The referral application under the *EPBC* act was submitted in December 2023 and is currently still with the Australian Government for assessment - does take some time. Until the EPBC approval is finalised, the project cannot proceed to construction, but anticipated advertising of the construction tender is expected late 2026. That's the details I have here. Any further update? No, I don't think.

Ms HEYDON - No, again, we're working through with the AGs around EPBC submission, which was in December 2023.

Mr VINCENT - The funding in the Budget is allocated a little bit in 2026-27 and then increase in 2027-28, 2028-29 and then driving back down in 2029-30. So, that's the anticipated timeline.

Ms HEYDON - 2030.

Mr VINCENT - But until we get that from the EPBC finalised.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister. The other part of this project, which is a separate funding to the main project, is \$3.9 million from the active transport fund for the pedestrian overpass across the Channel Highway as well.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Great. The Southern Outlet transit lane - what's happening with that?

Mr VINCENT - We are communicating with the federal minister towards ensuring that the funds can be put between Algona and Davey Street section - Tolmans Hill and Davey Street. The rock work has to be done and that is quite a process to do all that first. So, we're going through the process of reallocation of the funds federally and state.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - So, you are going to push ahead with that?

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Mr VINCENT - Yes, but that would be a change to the section then from Tolmans Hill to Kingston. We'll bring that back because we've got to do the rock work first so that we can finish that connection off. Then we'd go back to the other connector to Kingston later.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Have you thought about the traffic disruption? How are you going to manage that? Because it's going to be a big concern for my community.

Mr VINCENT - Certainly is.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister. As a commuter from down there, I have a very active interest.

Mr VINCENT - Self-interest - active interest I'll say.

Ms HEYDON - No, definitely, and that's actually part of the requirements that we'll be looking at for constructability around minimising impacts, particularly during peak, as obviously it's critical link through for everyone down south into Hobart. That's part of the considerations.

Because of that, that may see the sort of potential construction take longer than usual to sort of manage around that criticality of access, but that will be part of that future design and development. As the minister said, we're tendering for the rock-face protection activities mid this year, and it's likely to take some 12 months. We then want to progress with the transit lane, which is from Olinda Grove in to join with the connector lane and that transit lane that we've already completed. But that does require us further engaging with the federal government around reallocation of funds that they've allocated to go to this as a higher priority than the, let's say, stage 4, which is a Olinda back through to Kingston.

Ms LOVELL - Can I ask a follow up on that? Minister, can you - it's listed as part of the Greater Hobart traffic solution in the Roads programs. How much of that funding is allocated to this project?

Mr VINCENT - Just seeking clarification on that one. Thank you.

Ms HEYDON - Yes, one moment. From a state perspective, \$39.4 million has been allocated for the Southern Outlet transit lane; \$18.8 million was allocated for the Macquarie and Davey streets bus improvements. There was also federal funding which was \$80 million towards the transit lane proposed from Kingston through to Olinda Grove.

The federal government has committed \$80 million, and the Tasmanian government has matched \$20 million on an 80/20 arrangement. As I mentioned, though, we are working with the federal government on reviewing how we can reprioritise within that corridor funding to that priority stage of stage 3 so that we can construct that after the completion of the rock walls.

Ms LOVELL - The federal government funding just needs to be reallocated. You don't need more money from the federal government?

Mr VINCENT - I understand it's the reallocation at this point.

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Ms HEYDON - For stage 4, yes, they would be taking their money and allocating it through to stage 3, then working with them on the broader corridor.

Ms LOVELL - What happens to stage 4 then?

Mr VINCENT - That will be a continued work with the federal government.

Ms LOVELL - So, you'll need more funding from the federal government for stage 4?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. That's the way I read the numbers.

Ms LOVELL - Do you know how much more you'll need for stage 4?

Mr VINCENT - No, I haven't seen those numbers unless the deputy secretary has an idea.

Ms HEYDON - No. What we're also trying to do is make sure that there's a recognition of the state-only contributions to this corridor, and that those could be taken into account in an 80/20 split.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. Do you know the total cost of the whole project?

Ms HEYDON - I wouldn't hazard guess at this point only because it would be a guesstimate. I'll come back with perhaps an estimate based on the various stages of design, because some of them are early-design.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. Do you have a time-line for delivery of the project as a whole?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly not as a whole. We are waiting for the first bit to come out of the EPBC. Once we get the clarification on the rock wall stabilisation, we will have it. We know that's about 12-months' work, and we'll have a better indication then on the total time frame.

Ms LOVELL - With the total cost, would it be possible to get that broken down into the different stages?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, we should be able to do that. Definitely for the stages we've completed. The rock face protection case, we've got that well costed and then we've got some vindictive costings in relations to stage 3 and stage 4.

Ms LOVELL - Based on the requirement to request more funding from the Commonwealth Government, does that mean if you are not able to secure more funding the project won't be completed?

Mr VINCENT - I would have to reassess, as always as you work through those projects.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - With the bus stops on Huon Highway, do you know exactly which bus stops are going to be upgraded?

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Mr VINCENT - I haven't seen the exact list, but we have another allocation of them that we're doing and doing the DDA-compliance checks on.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Is that something you could take on notice?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister. I don't know if I'll get it back in time, but we can find a list of the bus stops that we're upgrading as part of the All Weather Program as well as those that were funded through the councils as well.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes, please. Thank you.

Mr VINCENT - There are two parts to that, some that we've allocated for upgrading and then we're also assessing all those that are left to see what the priority is and which ones are those are for future allocations as well.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Okay. Was that on the Channel Highway as well? Didn't say here, it just says Huon Highway.

Ms HEYDON - We're undertaking work at assessing on all of the state highways, state roads, to prioritise those which are most utilised in the first instance to provide then advice around what a future program could look like.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Could I then add to your list on notice of the Channel Highway bus stops to please?

I want to ask about the Spring Farm Connector. I asked this of the Minister for Sport the other day. I understand there's some issues with that proposed road. How are you going to deal with those issues?

Mr VINCENT - I'm not up to speed with that one at all. The handball is going both ways.

Mr GREGORY - Through the minister, we're currently working with council. We've provided council with some funding to undertake the feasibility work. That is being done by the council's project team. I will flag that it will be very, very challenging. There are a number of issues there that, in their own right, would be challenging, but there are several of them together. There're some significant geotechnical issues and an active landslip area, there are EPBC issues, and there are Aboriginal heritage issues all in the bottom half of that corridor. The council's team is quite aware that that's going to be a very, very challenging process to work through.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - At some point, will you just say it's not feasible or will you push through? I'm just aware that that whole new development there really is only one way in and one way out, and in the event of an emergency, that's not great for that community.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, Minister. I would say that there are ways of providing alternative exits from the subdivision, the Whitewater Creek area. With regard to what the end result will be, or the feasibility, either a way forward will be found or a way forward won't be found, effectively is what will happen. Some of that may, you know - not trying to be clever, but that's what a feasibility study is for. At the end of the day, the EPBC issues on their own

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may kill the project potentially, so there are a range of factors. The other factor for council to work through in the feasibility study in terms of the geotechnical issues and the active slip face, is you may be able to build a road but then spend that cost many, many times over, trying to keep the road in one piece.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Interesting situation.

Mr VINCENT - I wasn't aware of that one.

Ms THOMAS - Can I follow on from that? So that's related to the AFL high-performance training centre and the relocation of the ovals.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - The precinct.

Ms THOMAS - What is the plan B then? If, for the community, that can't be done, the AFL gets their high-performance training centre and the communities without facilities.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, Minister. The connection road is not required to deliver a high-performance centre or any of the community sporting infrastructure. It was an ask of council in having those facilities in precinct. The traffic studies that have been done don't indicate that it is required for the sporting facilities directly.

Ms THOMAS - But there's no DA as yet for those sporting facilities.

Mr GREGORY - There's not a DA for oval no. 4, which is the cricket oval, and that's particularly to support the expansion of cricket and women's cricket in particular, but that would be accessed off Gormley Drive.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - The issue is - I can't remember what that road is, where the school is, but that's going to become -

CHAIR - Congested.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Very, very congested with all that additional activity up there. The Spring Farm connector would solve lots of issues.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, Minister. I think there's an assumption that all of the traffic generated by all the activities just pile on top of each other. Well, it won't. A lot of the activities don't occur at the same time, and the traffic volumes are actually spread around.

Until very recently - I regularly took my children down to Lightwood Park. They played soccer there. It's only in very recent years that the gate has been opened on Gormley Drive. For many, many years there was a gate across Gormley Drive, which meant that wasn't available as an option to enter and exit the area. That is now open, and with the upgrading of Gormley Drive, I think there'll be much improved flow. Nevertheless, a lot of the activities won't be occurring at the same time. For example, the real activity that will be occurring associated with high-performance centre will be during the week, and in particular during the day, rather than on weekends when all the sporting activity is generally occurring. It's not just stacking all those together; it's looking at the spread of the traffic generation as well.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Minister, I could have perhaps asked this in 2.1, but I thought I'd save it for capital investment. You'll know what's coming: the Cam River Bridge. I'm talking about traffic congestion. The old Cooley crawl doesn't get any better. We had some recent survey works being done on the new bridge or some works being done and just worst possible day it could have occurred. There was no communication. It occurred on the first day of school, and the result was inevitable and the phone calls were continual.

Minister, where are we at with the review or whatever we're going to call it into the duplication of the Cam River Bridge or finding alternative solutions there?

Mr VINCENT - As you're aware, when the review came back it was difficult to do or wasn't required. I asked for a further analysis of setting up a bypass there. I travelled up the road to the other connecting road. I can't remember what it was called.

CHAIR - You went to Oonah Road?

Mr VINCENT - I went to Oonah Road.

CHAIR - Which was closed this whole time as well because of a flood event.

Mr VINCENT - We acknowledge that some errors were made in doing the work that day. That's one out-of-the-box.

The work on the bypass solution I believe has not started yet.

Ms HEYDON - No.

CHAIR - Acknowledging the topographical and geographical challenge.

Mr VINCENT - Yes. I'll ask the deputy secretary for a little bit more information on that. I think it is proceeding in the first half of the next financial year, so not far away -

CHAIR - In 2026-27.

Mr VINCENT - but I will ask for clarification on that timeline, please.

Ms HEYDON - Minister, I know that work has not commenced. It is in our schedule for commencing in the latter half of this year. That's to look at a potential bypass option as opposed to a second bridge which the survey had found wasn't warranted, but we are going to look at a potential bypass option through Cooley through to Doctors Rocks.

Mr VINCENT - So, that'll be proceeding - did you confirm that?

Ms HEYDON - It is on the schedule for the second half of this calendar year, or the start of next financial year.

CHAIR - We look forward to that and you can expect me to follow it up during the year, minister, to see how it's going.

PUBLIC

Just a couple of quick ones here. I'm pretty sure I understand what's going on but with the Bass Highway corridor work, the budget for 2025-25 was up to \$15 million, the estimated outcomes just under \$8 million and then pushed up to \$23 million the following year. Is this just a timing issue or have there been problems with those works?

Mr VINCENT - I understand that it's just a timing issue of getting those works out for the north of Latrobe, Sassafras, Parramatta Creek, and I think there was a fourth project as well - Christmas Hills.

CHAIR - It doesn't include any of the works west of Wynyard?

Mr VINCENT - No. The Bass Highway is Devonport and Launceston -

CHAIR - It does keep going, though.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I know, but this is relating to this section of the Bass Highway because it is split up.

Those four I just mentioned is the work being looked at the moment. I am not sure of the time-line of each of those.

The Bass Highway, Launceston - Devonport Corridor Strategy: six priority upgrades, options identified along this Category 1 road section of the Bass Highway will form part of a 10-year Action Plan.

The awkward one and the really ugly one, of course, is the Christmas Hills Road junction.

CHAIR - Do you hold your breath every time you go through there in the summertime?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, you're looking, eyes are going everywhere, that's for sure.

North of Sassafras, I mentioned, Parramatta Creek, north of Latrobe duplication, and then we're also looking at the duplication of Hadspen to Hagley and the Exton duplication as well.

Designs for Christmas Hills to Deloraine will be finalised in August 2026, and north Sassafras will be finalised in late 2026. The tender for construction of the Christmas Hills Road junction upgrade is expected to be advertised in October 2026 with construction to commence early 2027, and that will be a relief to us all. The finalisation of the design for the north Sassafras upgrade is pending the resolution of the Australian Government environmental approvals and access to the Sassafras Ampol service station where we've been having some discussions.

CHAIR - Just on the Lyell Highway, there was not a large amount, \$430,000, budgeted but none spent. There is a budget again, which is less, in this current coming financial year. What's the delay or the issue there?

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, that's actually the corridor strategy. We do have expenditure. In fact, again, it's planning expenditure, so it's small-ish. We're expecting forecasting at the end of this year about \$250,000 will have been spent.

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CHAIR - That doesn't show up in the estimated outcome yet for some reason. Maybe it's been done more recently?

Ms HEYDON - Perhaps, yes. It might just have been that it hadn't been logged at the time that the papers were pulled together, but we have spent \$250,000.

Mr VINCENT - Work to develop the corridor strategy is nearing completion and the document is expected to be published later this year. There is currently for the Lyell Highway Grantham and through to Strahan, \$20 million from the state government and \$80 million from the Australian Government towards it.

CHAIR - That'll be welcome, too, I can tell you. Just the last one, to Stanley. That was, again, there's \$3 million in the Budget, only 66 estimated outcome for this year - not the one we're in - and then more funding for next year. Can we be assured that work will start in this coming financial year?

Ms HEYDON - Yes, the package for the works for the south of Dovecote Road and West Inlet Track, they went to tender in Feb and they had tenders closed on 15 April. They're expecting that works will be commencing, hopefully, this month, potentially into next month at the start and completion in mid next year.

CHAIR - It's always a bit dicey going down there - there's lots of campervans around that take up more than their fair share of a narrow road.

Ms LOVELL - If I could just go back to the Southern Outlet, just with one final question. You did speak about traffic management during the construction period and that that's being worked through. Is it likely or can you confirm that you'll likely have to reduce traffic to one lane only - a single lane on the Southern Outlet while the construction is underway?

Mr VINCENT - That's not part of my forte on how many lanes are open, but I will ask for a bit more guidance from -

Ms LOVELL - There's only two.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, without sort of absolutely committing, one of the sort of requirements that I've asked the team to look at is during peak that we'll need to have two lanes so that could -

Ms LOVELL - Two lanes available during peak periods?

Ms HEYDON - Yes. So, that's part of the requirements. It might become challenging and we might have to look at how that can be managed, but appreciating the sensitivity and potential impacts from that road, we need to look at it from a whole of Greater Hobart transport perspective and impact on the network.

CHAIR - No other questions of infrastructure? We've got MAST. Oh, sorry?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - No, that's okay. Go to MAST, I'll send him an email.

Ms LOVELL - Can I just ask that one last question?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Yes, sorry, Sarah.

Ms LOVELL - This is with your indulgence, minister, because we are going back to probably way back at the beginning. It was just a follow-on from a question that you spoke about yesterday while in the hearing with the House of Assembly yesterday. There was some discussion around RTI requests and processing times within the Department of State Growth. I just wanted to follow up on that, if I may. There was an acknowledgement yesterday that the department's not meeting those requirements and you've said that they need to - you'd like them to be doing better. I just have a question around the number of staff - and I appreciate if you need to take this on notice. How many staff currently process RTI requests and how will the department being abolished and 250 jobs being cut, enable you to continue to process them and improve in that area and comply with the law?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I think the acting secretary responded to that and said it was something he's willing to look at to improve those numbers. I think 70 per cent was the figure that was put to us, which is outside the act, but we'd have to get more information on that certainly, and take that on -

Ms LOVELL - Are you happy for me to send that through on notice?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I am. We can certainly get that because it's quite amazing when you start to look into those things, how many staff are dedicated to some of those things.

Ms LOVELL - It's quite a bit of work, yes.

Mr VINCENT - It's a lot of work.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

CHAIR - I think you wanted to provide some information to the committee, too, before we close off?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you.

Ms HEYDON - Through you, minister, this is in relation to the question on unregistered vehicles. We did provide advice to just do around from mid last year to this point. Historical context might be handy. We targeted to collect around 5000 images per month from registration. The team has been able to provide. In 2023-24 financial year, there was 6992 unregistered vehicles detected, which is about 0.46 per cent of vehicles that recorded. In 2024-25 it was 8807 unregistered vehicles were detected. In 2025-26 up to 31 May there's been 5132 unregistered vehicles detected.

CHAIR - It's a concern isn't it because they're not registered, they're not covered. Thanks for providing that information. Do you intend to stick around for MAST? You do. We will let the rest of your team go. Thank you for your time and your team today. We will write to you with different questions on notice. Stop the broadcast.

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Marine and Safety Tasmania

CHAIR - Thanks, Minister. We don't have a lot of time. Could you introduce Lia for the purpose of *Hansard*.

Mr VINCENT - I would like to introduce Lia Morris, CEO of MAST and I think most of you know Lia and are very passionate person about her duties. Thank you.

CHAIR - I'll start off, and I may anticipate the answer, but, Lia the grant you've got to manage the obligations of MAST fall away over the forward Estimates, well it's slightly elevated for 2026-27, then falls away. What sits behind that?

Ms MORRIS - Through you, minister, as you know MAST is largely self-funded, so, we don't rely on consolidated revenue. We receive revenue from our licence fees and registrations, and we receive this recurrent grant from DSG to maintain our large facilities that we inherited when MAST was first formed. This grant has been reduced by \$470,000 over the forward Estimates. I suppose this grant was the only means that the government could apply a savings measure to MAST.

CHAIR - What does it mean in practice for you then?

Ms MORRIS - It means that we will manage this internally. It's not a huge amount of money that we're losing over the forward Estimates, but we will have to manage it internally.

CHAIR - Does that mean reducing staffing hours or how do you think you can manage within?

Ms MORRIS - I think a lot of the large facilities that we manage, own and manage are jointly used by recreational vessels. A good example is Kettering. Another good example would be Cygnet. So we can put some recreational funding into some of those facilities and that will share the load I think over the long term.

CHAIR - We know that - I'm not sure how many years this has been going on for now actually - the regulatory framework that we've talked about with your matter, dealing with TasPorts, where is that at?

Ms MORRIS - Through you, minister, look, that's a DSG project, it's not a MAST project -

CHAIR - Right. I should have asked them.

Ms MORRIS - but we have been undertaking some due diligence in accordance with a request from DSG. So, yes, we are undertaking that due diligence in terms of the potential transfer of the harbour master and the vessel traffic service back to MAST.

CHAIR - This has been going on, minister, for a long time now and I think we've just had extension, extension, extension of what I think is an MOU, is it, or some sort of -

Ms MORRIS - Deed of agreement.

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CHAIR - Deed of agreement, that's right. When do we expect this to be finalised, because it is a pretty important piece of work and as far as I can see, just going on and on and on?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. I had similar sort of frustrations -

CHAIR - Good.

Mr VINCENT - when I took the role on, to both DSG and MAST to the board. It is quite complex because it is interwoven into DSG - sorry, into TasPorts. We have seen some progress on the MAST side of things with being able to understand some of the complexities a lot more. We did come up with several different operating models, because it's already operating in certain facilities, to prevent some of the transfer costs and everything like that, but still be responsible by MAST. Some of those haven't worked out the way we thought they might have done so. Like everything, you have to look at practical working models. We reinvigorated DSG to continue on and at the moment, with the interim CEO of TasPorts, we're seeing more focus come on to that area about how it could be separated. So, it has been stop, start, stop, start. I do not deny that, it has been a level of frustration from everybody trying to dismantle it and put it back in a sensible way, but there has been a lot more cooperation over the last four or five months.

CHAIR - Change of leadership in Tasports perhaps?

Mr VINCENT - No. It was happening before that.

CHAIR - Was it?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly had some very sensible discussions with the MAST board, or the MAST chair and CEO, and it certainly accelerated with the interim chair coming in for TasPorts. I wouldn't like to put a timer on it, unless you know something more about how it's progressing?

Ms MORRIS - As I said, it's a DSG project, so they're managing it, so they're managing the timelines.

CHAIR - This is the interim chair. Is the chair that's there now the permanent chair - well, you know, as much as you are permanent in those jobs, but is he still the chair, interim chair?

Mr VINCENT - Sorry, the CEO.

CHAIR - He's the CEO, right.

Mr VINCENT - CEO, sorry, I might have got the wording wrong there: the interim CEO.

CHAIR - That's fine. Minister, I note that the variation in the infrastructure assets reflects the delivery profile of the Bridport Pier and Gordon Jetty, and re-evaluation of other marine infrastructure assets. Can you just talk to us a bit about the maintenance and upgrade program that's on the table for MAST at the minute?

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Mr VINCENT - Certainly, it's not something I'm totally across, so I will ask Lia to expand on that, including - I'm not sure about the Gordon - but I have been down to look where the Bridport Pier is going to go.

Ms MORRIS - Yes, so the Bridport Pier, through you, minister, is an election commitment back to 2021. We've got the job to deliver that election commitment and so that's what that element's about. Gordon Jetty is a facility that's owned and managed by us. It was damaged by fire in the early 2020s - I think it was 2023 - and so -

CHAIR - Is this the one at Lettes Bay?

Ms MORRIS - No, this is at Gordon.

CHAIR - Gordon, right, sorry.

Ms MORRIS - So, that's owned and managed by us. It was damaged by fire, needed to be replaced anyway, so we received a government grant of \$900,000 to replace the Gordon Jetty.

CHAIR - What's the timeline for that?

Ms MORRIS - Gordon is - just bear with me and I will tell you. It is due to be - sorry. Gordon, the contract was awarded to BridgePro in April and works are to commence on site in July and be completed by September.

CHAIR - Good-o. So, noting your deduction in the grants, are you looking at raising some of your fees and charges to compensate for that?

Ms MORRIS - We don't charge any fees or charges in relation to the actual maintenance of MAST's own facilities. We have looked at that in the past, but it's a very difficult situation, but we do charge fees and charges for, obviously, the recreational boating sector; but these were - most of the large facilities that we own are fishing facilities, so Bridport, Dover, Margate, all of those very big fishing facilities. They're the majority of the facilities.

CHAIR - There's not an intention to look at introducing new fees and charges, or increasing any of those?

Ms MORRIS - No. Not at this stage, no.

CHAIR - Yes, because every time you might need to contemplate it, the government keep cutting your budget?

Ms MORRIS - Potentially, but we'd have to go through a regulatory impact statement, obviously.

CHAIR - Yes, well, good, I'm good to hear that.

Mr VINCENT - I'm glad to hear that myself, too.

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CHAIR - and present that to the sub leg committee, at the appropriate time. Yes. Is there any other question?

Ms O'CONNOR - Just a quick one, just if I could get an update on the Cygnet Jetty: so, obviously the local community would very much like to be able to maintain access to that jetty, and I'm sure the member for Huon is very interested in this question too. There was an impasse, or there has been an impasse, and I understand Parks is in the mix along with MAST, and I'm wondering if there is any resolution, because I asked the minister for Parks about this a few months ago in this place, and it was still up in the air.

Mr VINCENT - I'm very pleased you remember to bring that subject up, and we have something prepared for you right here.

Ms O'CONNOR - Something you prepared earlier: I will be very happy to pass that on to Dr Woodruff, and I'm sure the new member for Huon will be happy to pass it on to the community as well.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you.

Ms MORRIS - So through you, minister, our understanding is that the third party has actually lodged a lease application with Parks and Wildlife Service. There was some delay in that individual lodging the application, because he required clarification around the terms and conditions on which he would accept a lease. So, in terms of the length of the lease, for instance, what standard the jetty would have to be raised to, we just wanted clarification from Parks on that; but our understanding is that an application was launched on 25 May.

Ms O'CONNOR - And is that - thank you, Lia, so is that - that's an application from an individual third party. In terms of community access, is there any line of sight to that question?

Ms MORRIS - Through you, minister, once again, our understanding is that this individual does want to provide community access if a lease application is successful. In terms of MAST's role, we've just - we've closed the jetty obviously, because as we discussed this time last year, I think, in November, it was actually raised to - we needed to raise it to a level for public use, which is very different from -

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes.

Ms MORRIS - from an individual who owns a facility. So it remains closed. We have actually postponed demolition, and are waiting for this issue to be resolved, but obviously from the board's - our board's perspective, there is a risk involved with that -

Ms O'CONNOR - Of course.

Ms MORRIS - and so that, you know, if it can't be finalised, we will have to make a decision.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you.

CHAIR - All good?

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Ms O'CONNOR - I'm fine on that, unless Clare has got more she wants to ask.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - No. I didn't know about that one.

Mr VINCENT - You do now.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - I will go and do some research.

CHAIR - Bec, you're right? Okay, well, thanks minister. I appreciate your time and input today. We will be back, I think it's 2, isn't it? Yes, 2 o'clock, and we're going to your portfolio of Minister for Housing and Planning, so we will let Lia go, but thanks for your time this morning.

The committee suspended from 1.18 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Homes Tasmania

CHAIR - Thanks, Minister and welcome back. We're on to Homes Tasmania, which I'm sure that you'll have a bit to say about that. If you can introduce the members of your team at the table and did you want to make any opening comments or inform us, or we'll drag it out of you through questions. Yep, sure.

If you can introduce the team at the table, please.

Mr VINCENT - To my right, I have Dr Anthony Reid, Director Construction and Housing; Shane Gregory, Acting Secretary of DSG. I'll allow the CEO to introduce himself as his staff. Ben Wilson, Interim CEO of Homes Tasmania; Jessemy Stone, Director of Housing Policy and Programs.

CHAIR - I'll go straight to Sarah.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Chair. Minister, it's noted in the budget papers this year that the interest bearing liabilities for Homes Tasmania debt is \$546.2 million. Can you provide a breakdown of what these borrowings have been used for?

Mr WILSON - Through you, Minister. Of the \$546 million, I can report that \$388 million was used for capital delivery programs for the construction of New Social and Affordable Housing, and \$158 million was used for financial system schemes, including majority being for the MyHome buyer scheme.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. That's great. How and in what timeframe will the Homes Tasmania debt, which is projected to reach \$882 million in 2027-2028, be repaid?

Mr WILSON - Through you, Minister. We have our current borrowings are of a 10-year interest-only loan at present. We have our first repayment due in 2032 and at the moment we are modelling the repayment requirements for that. There is also a potential option to refinance aligned with the life cycle of the asset itself.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have a timeframe for when that will be repaid? It will depend on what you do with refinancing.

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Mr WILSON - Correct. If it's refinanced or if there is a requirement to repay by the first [inaudible] payment of 2032, then we're modelling that at the moment.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, thank you. Minister, which entity will be responsible for servicing the debt following the transition of Homes to Tasmania, to Building Tasmania?

Mr VINCENT - I will look for clarification from the acting secretary - that will come under Building Tasmania.

Ms LOVELL - Given the increasing debt and the reduction in grant funding of \$182.4 million over the forward Estimates, how will you and what funding will you invest into delivering your Social and Affordable Housing targets?

Mr VINCENT - There's a few different things that have come to light and will continue to come to light, in our opinion, obviously we're going through a transition period at the moment. Next part of that is that we have seen existing and added federal assistance with different programs coming forward, that we're working very closely with the federal government on, which changes the playing field on a regular basis.

When we start to look at the KPMG financial report, as well, into Homes Tas, we're starting to apply our thinking to that, to how that may change some of those categories into the future, and a lot of the recommendations of really looking at how everything is financed, even re-looking at the pricing structure of homes, how we build homes. There's a lot of things being worked on at the moment. The next 12 to 18 months will be quite formative for us. We have a large number of land coming on board with to accelerate building, but obviously there's a lot of work needs to be done in that financial area. I will ask the CEO if you'd like to expand on that, from his point of view. That's why the ministry are more on a day-to-day basis.

Mr WILSON - To that point around future programs, there are a number that are touched on in relation to our response under, say, the Housing Australia Future Fund. There are some programs that have been jointly put together between state and federal in relation to the first-home owner and the 100,000-home commitment there, which Homes Tasmania has an obligation under that to deliver around. There are a number of initiatives that will support the capital delivery program.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, thank you. Given that there's machinery-of-government changes sort of underway and still in progress, are there any sort of key - you spoke before about the modelling around the debt repayments - are there any key financial decisions around borrowing and capital funding that have been deferred until those machinery of government changes happen?

Mr VINCENT - Not deferred, but probably will fit in with some of the changes. That's like some of the commitment towards the 100,000 homes that we've signed off on now. Most of the others are already worked into what we need to do.

The secondary part of that was, as it does swing across to us, in Building Tas, we'll be re-examining the medium- to long-term debt of Homes Tas and how that needs to fit in because there will be other programs coming forward I'm sure, because the federal government is just as committed as we are to making sure that we increase the supply of social and affordable houses.

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Ms LOVELL - Thank you. That's all I had, Chair.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, by your understanding, what's the definition of a home?

Mr VINCENT - Look, there's a couple of different aspects there. At the moment, a definition of a home - a roof over a head, whatever you like to call it - has become quite complicated because of a lot of the national building codes. So, if you think back to - some of us a who are little bit more mature in years - the original housing commission, they were cookie cutter homes, single-glazed, wood heater or the old oil heaters in them. Insulation wasn't around in those days, either. There wasn't the - I think Charlie Fluff might have been the first version to get pumped into a few roofs. It has changed a lot since then now and energy efficiency is certainly talked about.

One of the biggest issues that we have right around Australia, at all levels of government, is how we determine what is classed as a social or affordable home now. That seems to have a different definition in different states and everybody from Anglicare all the way through are battling with coming up with a fair and easy formula to say what is an affordable home.

It's getting worse at the moment, of course, because the financial pressures and the cost burdens on building a home. An affordable home is no longer what we used to class, probably 10 or 15 years ago, as an easy, affordable home. It is more of a middle section of homes because those costs of them now are quite regularly in the mid- to high-\$600,000 price bracket now. If you go to some other states, you can almost double that amount of money.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, the KPMG report found that there's no broad agreement over what constitutes affordable and social housing. You'd agree, though, wouldn't you, that it doesn't include land?

Mr VINCENT - How do you mean, sorry?

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, amongst the - when you have a look at the government's outcomes on housing as part of the 10,000 new homes, that the former premier Gutwein promised would be built by 2032, a number of those homes are actually blocks of land, aren't they?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, certainly. A big part of it is having available land and the right sized land to build what you need to build and also in the right places to deal with, especially affordable housing, so it's no good building something in one area of the state if there aren't people there who require that sort of housing. So, a lot of work's been done on the breakup of where people wish to live in affordable and social housing, and that does help us determine where we can put our money into providing that. Blocks of land are significant because Homes Tas does develop blocks of land. The big thing there is it's probably being used as a measure in the dashboard that not everybody's agreed with -

Ms O'CONNOR - Just because it's not a home or a house.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, but it is leading to a home. Your first step is to get your block of land, and if it's not built on in a certain amount of time, it comes back out. But, with the new dashboard which will be released shortly, it separates all the different parts of how we're measuring this so it's all transparent and can be seen very easily and then pulled apart and, if

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we need to do any more pulling apart, we will because we did recognise that there was a grey area there that people had trouble understanding, but it is a vital part of how we are heading towards our 10,000 plus because it's not going to stop at 10,000, it's going to keep going.

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, you'd hope so.

When Homes Tasmania was created and I think it was with the best of intentions at the time by the former minister, Mr Barnett. The homes act, I think it was a 1934 act. Anyway, it was a very old piece of legislation that had, arguably, held the state and Housing Tasmania in good stead for many years. What's the government's current thinking on statutory changes to give effect to the changes to Homes Tasmania that presumably are imminent because of the machinery-of-government changes and a decision that's been made to bring Homes Tasmania or Housing back into the general government sector.

Mr VINCENT - I'll ask the acting secretary to expand on that. It's not an area of I've been fully exposed to, but Shane certainly can explain that a lot better.

Mr GREGORY - Thank you, minister, and through you, obviously, bringing Homes Tasmania's functions and the delivery of Housing back into the general government sector into the department will require a legislative change and we're starting to work through what that looks like now. For that reason, bringing Homes Tasmania's functions into the new Building Tasmania is scheduled for the end of the year. It's not one of the early moves that we'll make, so there's a bit of time to work through to understand what the legislation best looks like. Part of that is looking at the old legislation that applied. There are certain roles and functions that need to be covered in legislation, so we're looking at what's in the current legislation, what was in the old legislation - is there a modernised version of the old legislation? So, there's quite a quite a bit of work to work our way through in that regard, but there will certainly be a bit of legislation.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thanks Mr Gregory. The timeframe is lofty and ambitious because we're halfway through the year now and, through you, minister, is what you are saying, that the work to develop a whole new Housing act, that the House, the parliament will likely see legislation this year?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, that's what we would like to see and that depends on what it looks like. Is it a whole new piece of legislation or is it, in fact, taking the previous legislation and doing a bit of work to modernise that and bring that back? It is an ambitious target to work our way through, but you achieve things by having ambitious targets, so that's where we'll go.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's right. So, what work is being undertaken on finding an appropriate definition of social and affordable housing?

CHAIR - Is this better under the Housing and Planning portfolio rather than Homes Tasmania?

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, I don't know. I mean Homes Tasmania is not going to exist for very much longer, so understanding how the work that Homes Tas has been doing and is doing now will morph into the new thing, I think it's pretty reasonable in this spot -

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Mr VINCENT - I might just -

Ms O'CONNOR - because the KPMG report - sorry - relates to the work of Homes Tasmania -

Mr VINCENT - It does.

Ms O'CONNOR - and that's where the issue of the definition has been identified.

Mr VINCENT - Correct. I can say that it has been raised in our min cons and everybody is grappling with it, as I said earlier on what it means, so we have to take it probably as a Tasmanian aspect of making sure that it's an acceptable level of housing, which we do these days with all the energy efficiencies and things that are built in to a home these days, but I might just ask Jess, have you had any talks with any of the peaks on what a definition might be for, that I'm not aware of?

Ms STONE - Through you, minister, there have been conversations about our program at a program level about how we define affordability. So, through our policies, we might, for example, provide those details for private rental incentives or through HAFF, what affordable housing is defined through those programs, but the question as it relates to legislation is broader than that.

Mr VINCENT - I might just add to that for where I sit in spending the money or trying to increase the program. It's about the affordability to all levels, including government. When I said before that we're seeing a lot of pricing around that mid-high 600s in some cases, and that can be because of the complexity of the site that we're building on, but we have seen some incidents where we've got fairly level sites at the moment, but we've been able to get quality brand new units quoted on below the \$500,000 mark, and that's being worked on with some of the building techniques and thinking a little bit differently about how the site can come together. From where I sit, that means it's getting closer to a social and affordable home for a lot of people.

Ms O'CONNOR - They're kind of different though, aren't they? Social housing and affordable housing, definitionally, you would think would be different because what we now understand as social housing is what we used to speak of as public housing. Affordable housing is about pretty much the percentage of your rent that would go towards paying the rent for that housing. Is there an understanding in government that you're probably going to have to cleave those concepts and concentrate on what makes social housing in part, too? Because that's a core business of government, or it used to be.

Mr VINCENT - Look, it's not something that we are totally focused on a day-to-day basis other than we know it's sitting there at a terminology that we have to understand better when we're having much larger conversations with the federal government. We do know that - there's an enormous amount of information - we know that 83 per cent of all our people requiring housing are one- or two-bedroom, we know that 50 per cent of that is for one-bedroom, 33 per cent is two-bedroom. As I said, we do understand the break up around the state of where people as needed. We have a lot of numbers around it, but there's some terminology in that that is maturing and developing as we - and this is for every state and plus federal government - in how we understand the needs of what we have to do going forward. The more financial pressures come on, put more questions asked about what that actually is?

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Ms O'CONNOR - I just note the scale of the debt that Homes Tasmania is now carrying that the House of Assembly - certainly I wasn't in this place at that time - warned government was a risk for Homes Tasmania. Not long after we got rid of the Commonwealth state housing debt, now there is a larger debt than that was when it was abolished, sitting on the books of Homes Tasmania.

Just following up on Ms Lovell's question to get some clarity about how the government intends to repay any of that debt to enable the Housing division in Building Tasmania to do the job Tasmanians need it to do. How is the government intending to pay that part of the debt or is it just going to be part of the general massive and ever-growing interest and debt repayments?

Mr VINCENT - I don't think I have the magic bullet answer there for you at the moment. It is obviously a large amount of work that we have to continue to do. There are some various options for - and we have been speaking with the financial institutes and other areas of investing into it so it's not all sitting with state and federal government - but that's part of that discussion we'll be continuing to have because the situation is not going to go away, the debt's going and the cost of building homes is going to keep increasing, so we've got to be willing to bear that cost in the short term while other methods of financing some of this are looked at and determined, but I haven't, in my short time in the ministry, I haven't got the perfect answer there yet, but I know the CEO and I both met with organisations that wish to get into funding some of these things, and we will continue to work through it, but I know every state's in the same boat at the moment, even on infrastructure, to support some of the housing projects.

Ms O'CONNOR - So would you be comfortable to sit at this table and rule out, for example, more privatisation of Homes Tasmania assets in order to pay the debt?

Mr VINCENT - The privatisation to housing providers, you mean there?

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, there's, you know, transfer of title potentially to community housing providers, transfer of management; I will ask you about transfer of title at some point, but there's a very large asset base there, and the concern, I guess, would be that government would be tempted to tap into that asset base to generate revenue to cover the debt it created through this folly.

Mr VINCENT - Look, I haven't been part of any discussions in that area yet, but in all honesty, everything needs to be on the table to talk through the whole situation to understand it all. There is benefits in some of the transfer of who manages the titles with federal maintenance contracts and things like that in place, but that's -

Ms O'CONNOR - It's not managing the titles though, is it? It's managing tenancies.

Mr VINCENT - It's tenancies there. It is not an area that we've fully got into yet, from my part anyway.

CHAIR - You have any questions, Bec?

Ms THOMAS - On Homes I do, but not on that issue. Thank you. Minister, last year in Estimates we talked about NDIS properties, I imagine this falls within Homes Tasmania, and the fact that there are a number of properties that have been constructed by developers for the purpose of NDIS housing, but that stand vacant. I still get community members reporting to

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me that, why are these properties around that are vacant, why isn't Homes Tasmania taking them up and, you know, trying to get people off the housing wait list into these properties; are you aware of any progress that's been made? I think last year you said that there was some - you were aware of it and that there was some hope that there could be - those properties could be somehow accessed.

Mr VINCENT - I will pass over to the CEO at a moment for a bit more clarification, but yes, we are fully aware of a growing number of properties as part of the federal program, not state but federal program, in building NDIS houses, and that many of them have been built in areas where people requiring that level of housing do not need to live, or do not want to live because of the lack of services, or it's usually around the service level that they expect because of their disabilities. There was some early discussion about that time I answered that question regarding the state having access to some of those homes to be able to utilise with some people that mightn't fit the full criteria, but I will ask for - if they were aware of any other clarification on the federal NDIS houses.

Mr WILSON - Thank you, minister. In relation to your question around the ones that you reported are being built and under-occupied, we haven't taken up any of those. Obviously we do support, through a number of different agencies, outcomes within the NDIS housing space, and look at assets that we can either bring part of our portfolio or bring other private assets in to support particular clientele with individual needs that might have different occupational therapy requirements. We do participate within that space, but as far as your question in relation to that portfolio, I can't advance anything further than what the minister has said.

Ms THOMAS - So ultimately it's a federal issue?

Mr VINCENT - Yes. I have had unofficial discussions with two people that have been involved in financing some of those and their disappointment in probably not understanding the full ramifications. I had talked to them that there is the opportunity, which probably wouldn't return the same investment, of being able to talk to homes, but it doesn't sound like they've taken up that option at this stage.

Ms THOMAS - As at today, minister, are you aware as to how many applicants there are on the social housing wait list, and how many are priority one?

Mr VINCENT - Don't think I've got priority one, but 5483 just comes to mind there, but I will just get that checked.

Ms THOMAS - Generally, while we're waiting for that data, how do you, I guess, avail yourself of staying updated as to that applicant list? I know I've heard you say before you lose sleep at night over some of these issues that are so complex to resolve.

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - But, how do you, I guess, keep yourself up to date as to what it looks like and what's being done to try and resolve it?

Mr VINCENT - In the office every day, it's very rare that we don't talk about it. It's forefront. It never goes away from our conversations. The amount of - I always have to write,

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and sign, and the amount of phone calls regarding all different parts of the sector, so it's always forefront of our mind. The fact is that over the last short period that I've been the minister, we have worked pretty hard in having some changes at Homes Tasmania with the change in the CEO and in the chair of the board, and I've spoken several times over the last few months about accelerating the program of houses.

A lot of the - although Homes Tasmania have in some cases accepted but been open to a lot of criticism in recent times, there is a lot of very good work they've also been doing in getting land ready to accelerate the program, and we're starting to see that now. The spreadsheets or the lists I've seen do give me some comfort that Mr Wilson has accelerated the program of getting titles and homes on the ground. We're also seeing that from the federal government. Now, we have to look at it, and it will be a bit of a broad answer, but the Housing Accord talks about us building 5000 homes a year. The most the industry seems to be able to do at the moment is somewhere between 2200 and 2300 houses. So, unless we double our workforce to use a broad-brush comment over that, we're not going to be able to do 5000.

Now, we know some of that we can increase because of modular, we can increase it because of granny flats, we can increase also with modular building, which is totally different to a mod home, and we are having discussions with a lot of different parts of the industry on that, and also increasing the number of contractors that are capable of doing, say, a three, four, five-storey block of units which comes into a different category of building. So, we have to increase the amount of people in that area to be able to do those buildings.

We've also been talking with companies that have a presence in Tasmania that are national-based, that do this in other states, and the cost of setting up those sorts of operations and what it takes to keep one of those operations going. So, there's a lot of different parts that we can see that will help in delivering more homes and certainly the size, the type, the one and two-bedroom homes that cater for the big 83 per cent of that waiting list; but we have to, over the next 12 months, change a bit of our focus.

We also have to look at various planning situations on the size of the blocks of land and how you might cluster some of these together so they don't look out of place in a subdivision, because if you're going to have a small two-bedroom unit, you don't want it on a 700-square-metre block, necessarily; you might want it on a 250 or a 350-square-metre block. There's a lot of different parts to that, it's not just the building, but that will allow for an acceleration of that and hopefully we'll be able to push past the 2500. I don't know where we can aim at the moment, but we need to just turn out more places.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. You mentioned there the idea of modular homes and I note the front page of today's *Mercury* reports the Rockliff government will underwrite finance for those wanting to build a modular home as a way of promoting more offsite construction. Did you receive, or did the government receive any advice from Homes Tasmania on that particular policy announcement?

Mr VINCENT - I'm not sure whether the Premier's office certainly did. There has been a lot of discussion regarding modular homes mainly because they're built offsite, so they're not classed the same as financing a house that's fixed to a block of land. For instance, when you build them offsite, to be able to pay for it or to get a loan for it, it's got to be onsite. So, there's a transition period there, and that's what the Premier was talking about, that time lapse, you might as well say, from being able to construct to get it onsite and make it so the bank can

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finance it. There's various methods we're doing at the moment with Podmatrix out at Brighton, of owning the block of land next door. So, we pick the home up and we move it over onto Homes Tas land and pay for it so that Podmatrix can keep producing, so we sort of finance the middle part of it. But this is a bigger program of looking at how we can make sure that the flow of mod homes happens on a smoother basis.

Ms THOMAS - So, that announcement by the Premier came directly out of the Premier's office, not from your office, as Minister for Housing?

Mr VINCENT - Correct.

CHAIR - When we talk about underwriting, who are we actually underwriting?

Mr VINCENT - Look, I haven't got all the details on that yet. That would be worked out with the Treasurer.

Ms THOMAS - So, this is an announcement that the Premier has made as a Housing policy, without consultation with you or with the department or Homes Tasmania?

Mr VINCENT - There has been discussion about some of the planning and financing issues on a lot of different subjects previous, leading up to that.

CHAIR - Can I just go back to the underwriting bit again, minister -

Mr VINCENT - Sorry, that's the word I choose to use on this.

CHAIR - That's the word that was used by the Premier.

Mr VINCENT - It was too, wasn't it? No, that's fine.

CHAIR - Sometimes I get a little bit concerned around underwriting private companies when this is our money and we've got money we need to put into homes and other things. So, when I go back to that question of who will be underwriting, are we underwriting the modular home construction companies? Because some of those have been in business for a long time there, surely they've got the balance sheet to support this themselves. Or what are we actually talking about?

Mr VINCENT - I haven't got all the details before me, but I understand it's more about the individual.

CHAIR - Who's the individual? The person purchasing the home?

Mr VINCENT - The individual who's purchasing it to put it on to a block of land.

CHAIR - So, no other scheme addresses that? Is that what you're saying?

Mr VINCENT - I'm not aware of all the details around that at the moment.

Ms THOMAS - Like Help to Buy?

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CHAIR - Yes. So, Help to Buy - you wouldn't be able to use that for a modular home? I thought it was more broad.

Mr VINCENT - May well be able to, but I don't know the full circumstances, sorry.

CHAIR - Will this require legislative change then to enable it?

Mr VINCENT - I'm not sure on that.

CHAIR - Can anyone assist with that? Because if this is just going to be brought in and we're giving money to who knows who, when there could be other schemes available to support this. I'm not sure why, particularly without consultation with yourself, Minister, as the minister who is responsible for Housing, I just find that extraordinary. Can anyone tell us whether they'll need to be legislative change or regulatory change around this?

Mr VINCENT - Work will continue in finalising the design and that will be worked through overcoming months.

CHAIR - Can I get some assurance that we won't be providing money, taxpayers' money, to entities until the parliament's well informed and has an opportunity to comment on that, because we do so on behalf of the people of Tasmania and we see money provided hand over fist, in some cases, to profitable businesses where they - one could argue they should be able to do it on their own, or if there's other mechanisms that are available to them. I'm just deeply concerned we're going to allow money to be spent that has no scrutiny over it until the decision's made.

Ms LOVELL - Can I just ask a follow up?

CHAIR - Are you able to take that forward?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, and there's still a lot of work to be done on finalising what has been announced. So, we'll work through that.

Ms LOVELL - I just wondered, Minister, were you aware that the Premier was going to make that announcement and the detail of it?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, we were informed just before that.

CHAIR - How long?

Ms LOVELL - Like just before? How long?

Mr VINCENT - We'd been having discussions about some of the issues and complications on dealing with some of these new ways of construction and we were notified, I think, the day before or might have been 48 hours beforehand.

Ms LOVELL - But you weren't consulted on the specific policy that the Premier's announced?

Mr VINCENT - No.

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CHAIR - So, you weren't aware of the underwriting commitment?

Mr VINCENT - No. Sorry - the 48 hours beforehand. Details to be worked through.

Ms LOVELL - Just seems - yes, understand.

CHAIR - Yes. It's put you in an awkward position.

Ms LOVELL - It does, and I would have thought there's some pretty critical input that you could've have into a policy announcement like that.

CHAIR - And understanding how it actually will apply and who to and how.

Mr VINCENT - I'm sure that'll be worked through in coming months.

Ms LOVELL - I can't believe they didn't give you FAQs for this hearing, Minister.

Ms THOMAS - They're probably not yet developed.

Ms LOVELL - What's going on there.

Ms THOMAS - They've probably got a lot of questions themselves.

CHAIR - Anyway, we'll have the opportunity to ask you further questions.

Mr VINCENT - Correct.

CHAIR - One would - despite the fact they weren't really engaged in this policy announcement, will you be in a position where parliament resumes to answer questions on this?

Mr VINCENT - I will make sure that I have -

Ms LOVELL - I suspect he'll be.

CHAIR - Further.

Mr VINCENT - as much knowledge as I possibly can for when parliament resumes, because I would expect a question or two.

Ms LOVELL - I expect he'll be rushing up.

CHAIR - And, it's not just going to say that that's for the Treasurer, or that's for the Premier: we're not going to get that handball?

Mr VINCENT - No, no, as much as I certainly can, as we work through it, I will always be honest with all of you in the Chamber.

Ms THOMAS - On the same topic, minister, have you received any advice from Homes Tasmania or your department on the idea of modular homes, previously?

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Mr VINCENT - We've certainly talked on occasions about it. I've also had conversations, I think I've said in this Chamber before, regarding my conversations with a couple of different banking people who I've been involved with over the years, about some of the issues to deal with modular homes and financing them for people. But no, that's all.

Ms THOMAS - Must be incredibly frustrating for staff in these areas to hear these government announcements, without first having their advice, or, so I guess - what mechanisms are there through the processes that you go through, with your department to work through these sort of announcements, when they're made without having first sought advice, or consulted with the areas who are the experts in these particular areas?

Mr VINCENT - We've recognised for a long time that there are issues in some of the new, modern ways of building places, that we do have to understand, as I said before, issues with respect to planning and also with financing that have come up. There are a lot of other different issues with the building codes around tiny homes, and things like that, too, that we're starting to understand, that it's not quite as easy as just bang, 'Go and do it'.

The regular conversations of frustration from the industry, from Homes Tas, at different times, from various people that are involved in these different parts of the community, that add up to us trying to do some of these things, like the Premier has done in the last couple of days.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, do you know how many Homes Tasmania properties are vacant at this time?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I can grab that before you in a sec, and the reason why.

Just in relation to your other question before, there's 5507 presently on the list, the waitlist. The highest priority is 686, and that's according to the latest dashboard figures.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you.

Mr VINCENT - I'll just get those for the - yes, CEO has that there.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister. As at 31 March 2026, there were 239 dwellings managed by Homes Tasmania that were vacant.

Ms THOMAS - For various reasons? Can we have a breakdown of why, like that they've been damaged, and getting repaired or?

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister. Forty-nine of those were in our standard vacate maintenance process, and there were 190 of those that were, for specific reasons such as fire damage, major works or insurance works.

Mr VINCENT - Can I expand on that a little bit, please? Because it is very important. It's a common thing we strike, with people criticising about home vacancy, and the turnaround time, and - of homes when they've been vacated, to when they are able to be re-let has changed a bit, because of an increase in focus on changing the energy rating when we've got the opportunity, or it might be an upgrade to the bathroom, or some other part of the home.

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But we also have a lot of insurance claims that have been happening, and if I could just read these couple of pages out - please on arson - and this financial year, there's been 13 confirmed arson incidents, with a further two currently under investigation. In addition to this, there are a number that are result of accident, or tenant misadventure, as well. There are a lot of things there. Then you have to determine whether you demolish the house or whether it is repairable. When you look at the maintenance bill: if you're doing basic maintenance in the changeover of a house, and some upgrades, it's about \$28,000. If you are taking it to the next level, it's about \$35,000, off the top of my head. There's work involved with that, and time with contractors' insurance. But one of the growing issues that we're having is methamphetamine contamination, and 17 per cent end of lease public housing properties test positive for methamphetamine contamination and the average time to remediate these properties back into service is 285 days. The average cost is \$66,000 per dwelling.

CHAIR - What do you have to do? Strip the place?

Mr VINCENT - Testing is - and I will ask for a little bit more advice from the CEO -

Ms O'CONNOR - They're toxic, too.

CHAIR - I know.

Mr VINCENT - carpet and it can be the plaster as well.

CHAIR - The plaster, too?

Ms O'CONNOR - Yeah, in the paint.

Mr VINCENT - The CEO might have some more up-to-date information.

CHAIR - Obviously, any furnishings, like curtains and stuff.

Ms THOMAS - Yeah, we talked about this last year, too.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, you're correct. In a lot of cases, it is stripping of complete internal linings and reinstall floor coverings, soft furnishings, et cetera. The extent of the issue can become quite large within the property quite quickly. It is very much an issue we take really seriously and, obviously, we need to rectify that 100 per cent before we reoccupy those premises. Unfortunately, it does come at a significant cost and time.

Ms O'CONNOR - When a house is vacated, is there a test that's undertaken for methamphetamine residues or is there some intelligence that Homes Tas gets to indicate that it could be a toxic interior?

Mr VINCENT - Each property - I'll ask the CEO.

Mr WILSON - I can confirm that there is a test that's undertaken under every vacate. Unfortunately, that's resulted in about 17 per cent of the properties being detected as positive. So, during that, it certainly is a vacate, there's a test. Obviously, there can also be quite visible scenes that indicate that it could be present.

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CHAIR - Do they have to do much testing - you can just tell?

Mr WILSON - Yes, but certainly our staff are qualified to undertake that testing and some of our maintenance contractors as well.

Ms O'CONNOR - Did you say 17 per cent of the vacant properties end up, on average, have methamphetamine in them? How do you clean that and what does it cost on average?

Mr VINCENT - \$66,000 per dwelling. That's working on what we presently have as figures over the last six months.

CHAIR - Some may be more obviously, some may be less.

Mr VINCENT - The message in there for all of us is that just because the place is vacant doesn't mean that Homes Tas aren't working with it, or Loretto or one of the other providers for that matter as well, and there are a lot of different extenuating circumstances why that place might be vacant. That's something we forget in amongst the numbers sometimes.

Ms O'CONNOR - People understanding all the pressure in the rental system see a vacant home -

Mr VINCENT - Of course they do.

Ms O'CONNOR - and it affects them and that's quite reasonable.

Mr VINCENT - Yep.

Ms THOMAS - Have there been any changes to the way maintenance is contracted by Homes Tasmania in the last 12 months?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, there has been a bit which will ask the CEO to explain.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, yes, there has been a change in the way that we are undertaking our maintenance practices. We did bring an internal model into our southern operations some months ago. The reason for that is concerns around our current contractual performance and also we see this is a significant opportunity to have direct contact with our contractors. We now have a contractor panel that's in place to undertake maintenance requirements for us. We see that very much as a cost-effective way to get greater value in the output by managing in that and removing the middle contractor, as such, from that. That process has just been undertaken in the north of the state and will hopefully be undertaken in the north-west in the not-too-distant future, so that we bring that into an internal panel of professional contractors and builders to undertake directly under work orders from Homes Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, that's in house? That's an in-house capacity now?

Mr VINCENT - Not fully in house, partially.

Mr WILSON - I would call it a hybrid model. We are still using external contractors to undertake the physical work. What we have done is probably taken the third party that's been

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managing that and taken that management opportunity in house, which we can gain greater control around and a greater cost base around.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's good.

Ms THOMAS - Previously, was Homes Tasmania contracting out the contracting of services.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, yes, it's under a head contract model, which is not uncommon, to see through community housing providers or other states and jurisdictions would use a head contractor model. The availability of head contractors to undertake maintenance for domestic properties in Tasmania is very limited and we were not meeting our performance and KPIs that we're expecting through that model under that agreement and by bringing it in house, we've gained greater control around the outcome of the performance and KPIs of those individual contractors.

Mr VINCENT - That also helps with the system that insurance companies also need to use where the process can be longer than expected. We're trying to make sure that Homes Tas can move some of those things as quickly as they can without having to go through a blown-out system.

Ms THOMAS - Will that save any money doing this this way?

Ms O'CONNOR - Has it?

Ms THOMAS - Has it saved any money?

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, yes, so we projected a percentage saving there in the south and so far our performance has indicated to that and we see that as additional money that can potentially go back into maintenance works -

CHAIR - What percentage?

Mr WILSON - Around 10 per cent.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, that's good. How many contractors are on that panel?

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, I would actually have to take that on notice to give you a breakdown of contractors per region if you would like.

Ms THOMAS - Yeah, that would be great.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, certainly. Happy for that to go on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - How many titles does Homes Tasmania own?

Mr VINCENT - I'll let you have that one.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, I would have to take that on notice. I can obviously give you the figures of the management properties that we currently manage, but we

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have an enormous amount of titles that would be still sitting with community housing providers, as an example under RMA arrangements, that are still under our ownership and on our balance sheet. Through you, minister, I would have to take that notice to get that exact number.

Ms O'CONNOR - So another way of asking the question, I guess, is how many homes, houses, does Homes Tasmania own?

Mr WILSON - Again, through you, minister, I'd have to take that on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - Can I just say - and this is no slight on you, Mr Wilson - that's information that is usually readily available at the table and well understood. I'm just a bit surprised that it's not available to the committee. I think it's somewhere over 11,000. Well, that's the last time it was checked, but I would have thought there was information that was available to you, minister.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, it is. I haven't got that here at the table though, that I'm aware of, sorry.

Ms O'CONNOR - So you'll take that on notice?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly will.

Ms O'CONNOR - How many homes are managed by community housing providers that are Housing Tasmania stock?

CHAIR - Homes Tasmania?

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, yeah.

CHAIR - You're just regressing a little.

Ms O'CONNOR - I am regressing. Just thinking about the good old days, Chair.

CHAIR - I'm not sure they were.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think they were before it became Homes Tasmania. I think they were better days for the entity.

Mr WILSON - Through you, minister, I'd have to take that on notice as well. There are progressive delivery programs that would take into consideration those numbers as well that have been delivered at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. How many titles of Homes Tasmania property have been transferred to community housing providers? That is not tenancy management agreements, but titles to the property.

Mr WILSON - Look, again, through you, minister, I'd have to confirm those numbers. There obviously have been programs in the past with the stock leverage program, going back some years ago where there were title transfers. I can tell you that our model moving forward

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has not incorporated title transfers and, where we have been delivering on Homes Tasmania-owned land, it is being done through the community housing providers through an RMA over an extended period of time where they receive a guarantee to manage those properties. Obviously, seeking and gaining the CRA without having title transfer occur through those new deliveries, but to have the exact answer I would have to take that on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thanks. I mean that policy approach would sound like it's - well, the effect of that policy approach is really to protect the public's assets, isn't it? Because there was a time early in these reforms where community housing providers were lobbying government to obtain title because they thought that would give them more leverage with the banks, which of course is a significant privatisation risk. So, minister, it is no longer the government's policy to transfer title? Because one of your predecessors did and I think there are about 500 titles, I can't remember exactly, but it's quite a few.

Mr VINCENT - There are advantages for us keeping the titles there, but certainly having a partnership with some of the housing providers that are able to offer a lot of services and tap into different funding pools that we can't as a state. The partnership agreements there are very central in many aspects which allow for us to transfer some of those properties for the advantage of the state also but keep title of them. The CEO may wish to expand on those partnerships.

Mr WILSON - There are a number of partnerships. To answer your question, it's very well-known through the community housing provider (CHP) sector that our way of interacting is through non-title management transfers and looking at RMAs and different ways of supporting new outcomes with them and, obviously, yes, they do have a desire for that, but we're working through different security arrangements in a range of different ways we've been able to support them and I can confirm that to your questions earlier, we believe it's around 330 titles that were transferred under those existing programs.

Ms O'CONNOR - Three hundred and thirty titles transferred.

Mr WILSON - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - I think this is the right spot to ask about the NRAS properties that are coming offline. The National Rental Affordability Scheme builds that happened 10 or 15 years ago but agreement with the Commonwealth is expiring or the funds that were behind NRAS are drawn down, so there is a question mark over big NRAS properties like, for example, the UTAS accommodation in the city. Does Homes Tasmania have line of sight to that question because there are students living in NRAS properties, for example, who don't know whether the rents will continue to be subsidised so they're more affordable.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. I'll ask the CEO to clarify that.

Mr WILSON - In relation to that exact example with the University of Tasmania, I can't answer that, but what I can say is that there were a number of partnerships where the state government provided assistance through those NRAS programs and a lot of those sit with community housing providers or other non-government organisations.

We have linked our contributions to a longer-term hold on those, albeit their NRES payments will cease, their commitment through us providing support at the time was for them

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to be retained for the purpose of that program for an extended period of time. I'd have to take on notice what that extended period of time is, but I believe it was probably between 20 and 30 years.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Is it possible, Mr Wilson, to go specifically to the university accommodation in Elizabeth Street, for example, where I understand those NRAS funds are close to being drawn down - if not this year, it's sometime next - with the Commonwealth's contribution.

Do you have any information you could share about that particular student accommodation, as an example?

Mr WILSON - Minister, I don't. I'm happy to take this on notice if our organisation has had any dialogue with them. I certainly haven't myself, but I'm certainly happy to take this on notice if the minister would like to find out further whether there's been any dialogue between Homes Tasmania and the University of Tasmania.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, because it's becoming imminent and pressing.

Mr VINCENT - I'm happy to take it on notice.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's not something that's been raised with you, minister.

Mr VINCENT - No, it's not.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Thank you, Chair.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Minister, is there a cap on the amount of money that participants can have in their own personal savings while they are participating in the MyHome scheme?

Mr VINCENT - I'll have to get a little bit more detail on that. I'm not sure on the savings side. There's an income cap associated -

Ms LOVELL - I know there are caps associated with the value of properties that they can purchase and those sorts of things.

Mr VINCENT - I did read them out in this Chamber.

CHAIR - If you want to do this, we'll go into 8.1, in a minute. We might do that there, do you want to get your people at the table. If that's alright?

Can I just ask a question from Homes Tasmania perspective? I know that in the chapter on your financial statements in budget paper 4, it says that there's a decrease in grants and subsidies from 2026-27, reflecting updated estimates of capital contributions through the Australian Government. What were those capital contributions to fund specifically that are either no longer - you have a housing support program and a social housing accelerated payment. What does that actually mean for those? I assume that's all Australian Government funding we're talking about and not any reduction from the state?

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Mr WILSON - Through you, minister. Thanks for the question. The Social Housing Accelerator Program was a \$50 million program by the Commonwealth for us to accelerate social housing outcomes. We have a number under construction at the moment and that will come to an end during that period, so that Commonwealth funding is for a period of time.

CHAIR - Is that also for a period of time, but also for a number of properties?

Mr WILSON - Yes, there's a number of properties that have delivered under that \$50 million.

CHAIR - How many to be delivered and will they all be delivered?

Mr WILSON - Yes, I can answer that there are none at risk at the moment, and I'll just get the number for you if you like. While we're doing that, I'll touch on the other one which is the housing support program. That was a mix of, again, requirement for delivery of some social housing properties, but also some funding from the Commonwealth to assist in infrastructure requirements to get properties up that may be at risk of actually feasibility up, for infrastructure costs to be able to support that. There have been a number of properties under that that have been delivered by Homes Tasmania and also some that we've supported some of the community housing providers with.

To your earlier question about how many properties under the \$50 million, there's 128 being delivered under that program.

CHAIR - And was there a target that the Commonwealth set that you had to meet or was it just do as many as you can?

Mr WILSON - With that program, we had to present the best value for money with the outcomes that we could achieve. Also, there was a requirement around being an accelerator program as to which one would fit within the required timeframe for delivery as well. We had to look at what was most appropriate from a risk perspective to ensure that we could deliver them and that we didn't miss out on that funding, because it was critical for the state, and 128 did present value for money for the Commonwealth.

CHAIR - Are there any other questions for Homes Tasmania directly? If not, minister, we'll go to your portfolio of Housing and Planning under 8.1.

Output Group 8 - Housing and Planning

8.1 Housing and Planning

CHAIR - I don't know if you wanted to change anyone at the table, did you?

Mr VINCENT - Just might bring Sean to the table. I don't think we're going to need Homes Tasmania.

CHAIR - Well, I wouldn't imagine so. We've done the scrutiny on them.

Mr VINCENT - Just wait and see if something pops up.

CHAIR - Don't run away. If you introduce your new person.

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Mr VINCENT - I'll allow Sean to introduce himself and his title, thank you.

Mr McPHAIL - Thank you, minister. Sean McPhail, Acting Director of the State Planning Office.

CHAIR - Thank you, so Sarah, back to you.

Ms LOVELL - Well, that question I asked before.

Mr VINCENT - We're seeking that information now, so as soon as that's available, I'll bring it forward.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

CHAIR - I'll go to Clare then.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - What work has been done to consider tiny homes on wheels as a legitimate way of increasing some of the supply of housing in Tasmania?

Mr VINCENT - There's a lot of, and I was going to say 'complications' is not the right word, but the planning scheme already allows for tiny homes to happen. There is covered off, I think it's 13 different zones that you can apply to have tiny homes there. The complication comes in the form of how long it's on site from being what is a movable home on wheels to a permanent earthing on site. A lot of that comes under CBOS and under building regulations, which creates another layer there of open space access to grey water, black water, running water, parking or anything else like that. But, as far as being able to apply to have a tiny home on a site that is available, whether it's wheeled or unwheeled, it's just, when there's wheels there, there is usually a limitation with councils under the timeline that you can have a caravan on site. Most councils have a policy regarding that sort of thing.

Then you get into another complication with the wheels of whether it's registerable for road or not registerable. Once again, say one property comes connected on a site that comes under a building then, not a movable object or building or asset, and that brings in those complications then of setback, sewage, water, everything else involved there so.

There are a lot of different moving parts to it. There is a lot of conversation, whether it's the tiny homes on wheels, tiny homes, whether it's granny flats as we refer to them without offending grannies, but that's obviously an area where some people see being able to keep family members at home. Whether it's mum and dad having a place to downsize, or whether it's keeping teenagers or young people still utilising the site to save money for their first home, all those different things. There's a lot of different moving parts to this. The tiny homes people have been to see us a few times to understand some of the complications. A lot of those complications are with CBOS, not so much with planning.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - So, you've kind of described the fact that there isn't an easy pathway for approval. Has any work been done in amending that pathway for approval to make it easier?

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Mr VINCENT - It is available for planning approval now. If you wish to put a tiny home in, if it meets all the regulations, you are able to do that. I will ask for some clarification from Sean on this.

Mr McPHAIL - Certainly. Thank you, minister. Through you, minister, obviously the way you've put it's very well, across the full spectrum of regulations depending on the type of tiny home. I think it becomes more complicated when they're sort of the less conventional, I guess, tiny homes on wheels and depending on sort of how they are used in that perspective. Obviously, from a planning perspective, a house is a house. So, if it's used as a residential use, it's assessed accordingly in the planning scheme. Obviously, there can be complications on how you might classify that from a building perspective.

A road-registrable vehicle, as the minister referred to, is not something that's classified as a building, for the purpose of the building regulations, which can cause some, I guess, regulation gap. Some good examples are probably wastewater management and bushfire management. That's something that we've been looking at quite closely with local government and CBOS in that space to see how we get the right settings across the full spectrum of things, because I think a lot of the issue is there's probably been some confused messaging put across from various places because it's less conventional. They can vary.

It's a matter of trying to get that clear messaging out as to what regulations may or may not apply. I think there's been some confusion put out from perhaps some in the industry, perhaps because they're different, they don't need to meet certain regulations. What we're wanting to see is making sure that if these things are being used in a permanent way on a particular site, that they're safe, liveable and the impacts on those are managed accordingly, like any other residential use would across the full spectrum of things, but as the minister referred to, there's a variety of things, including council bylaws, which I know some councils have, which perhaps have caused some confusion as well in that space.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - They've got some bylaws, but the pathway for approval is really tricky because as soon as it becomes permanent, it's no longer road-registrable and then you have to assess your tiny house against the rules for standalone house, which just don't work when you're looking at a lightweight structure on wheels. It's very, very tricky. There's lots of people who would love to live in them. I feel like we need to work out how we can fix up the regulations so that it becomes easier.

The other thing that I would say is when you're looking at short-stay accommodation, a lot of people have these lovely tiny homes and people come and stay in them for a night or two. Well, those can be set up with plumbing and all the things that would make the tiny house considered permanent. It's okay for a structure like that if you've got someone coming every couple of days and staying in it for 365 days of the year, but you can't have the same person living in it for 365 days of the year; do you see how that's a bit of a conundrum?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, there's a few things like that. It is something that is discussed nationally as well. The state is dealing with this at the moment.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - What work are you doing, then, to advance this issue, because you've been able to describe the issue and you tend to go round in circles when you're trying to get compliance; so, has any work been done in amending the rules?

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Mr VINCENT - There is work being done on amending a lot of different parts of the planning scheme to make sure that we have as smooth a system as we can for some of the alternative conversations, but as you say, it triggers a lot of other little things. I won't say it's our main focus at the moment, but it is a constant conversation about how we can make it simpler to bring us some of these versions in. Unfortunately, there's been some complexities of some of the alternative smaller accommodation not being up to standard as well, which has created some industry visual effect that has scared some of the authorities into opening up a tin of worms. There is some cautious on how they go about changing some of those things, but other than that, it is something we're very aware of and working on.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - But it's not your focus?

Mr VINCENT - Well, it's not 100 per cent of our focus at the moment because we've got a lot of different parts of it, but it's something we are working on; it just means it's not our main -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Because there are lot of people in my community who are already living in them, but flying under council's radar, so it would be really good to bring those people into compliance, given that tiny homes you can build for much more affordable - and it gives people that sense of security and comfort and pride, something that they can own, because you can have a really beautiful little tiny house that can be quite high-spec in fact, and still quite affordable. We also know that there are lots of people living on large rural properties who would be quite happy to host a tiny house. You know, we're talking about the number of people on your social housing wait list. It could be a really good solution but it does require, you know, a good hard look at the regulations and what we can do to make it a legitimate housing option.

Mr VINCENT - As we've said, there're a lot of different moving parts to it, covering off on a lot of different areas -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Does that mean that it's too hard, when you say a lot of moving parts?

Mr VINCENT - No, it's not too hard. It means these directions need to make sure - because when you allow one thing, you open up a whole quandrum of other issues, and that can be in somebody that might want to set up a little village of them.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Well, I was going to say, have you looked at some innovative solutions in other jurisdictions -

Mr VINCENT - Yes, we have.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - like the Boyanup tiny house village?

Mr VINCENT - It's how you mix in those. We do use a lot of the modular homes, the smaller homes for like, Youth2Independence where we have six-to-eight on a block that work quite well when you've got a controlling identity like that, but most of the planning scheme parts control the number you're allowed to have auxiliary drilling. If you go to rural, like I think you just mentioned a few minutes ago, it is in regards to being able to use that rural property for somebody working or involved with the management of that property, or worker

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accommodation can be applied for in this, and many farmers do use versions of this sort of accommodation for that already, so like I'm saying, there is a lot of avenues - and some of the people that you touched on, we'd hope Kingborough Council, if it was that council, is not listening to us - but can apply now for that to be perfectly made legal by going through the proper process, so I will just -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Well, they'd run into problems because you need a building surveyor to sign off on your tiny house, which needs to be assessed against the rules for a standalone house. It's sort of not quite right saying that, yes, there's a way you can get them approved.

Mr VINCENT - Yes, but you come back to a standard of housing and then who takes responsibility for that standard of housing into the future, so -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - But if we write some rules and we work out what would it be that we need to make a tiny house safe, and all the different things, write the rules specifically.

Mr VINCENT - I would say if it didn't qualify for building regulations now and not willing to have a building survey look at it, it could be a major problem going forward, so you have to be very careful.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - But a lightweight structure on wheels cannot be assessed against the same set of rules.

Mr VINCENT - No, but it's still got to be assessed if they want to live in it permanently on that site.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - We need a new, distinct housing type.

Mr VINCENT - Just clarify something here, please.

Ms O'CONNOR - We need a few, because we need to be looking at communal housing models as well, co-ops, that sort of thing.

Ms LOVELL - Multi-gen.

Ms O'CONNOR - What was that one?

Ms LOVELL - Multi-generational.

Mr VINCENT - That's just reminding me that, you know, a lot of this does sit with building and with the National Construction Code as well, so fully understand that.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Yes, I agree. Is there advocacy to that next level of government around the National Construction Code?

Mr VINCENT - We have pretty regular discussions lately, no different to the legislation in this House with the National Construction Code.

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Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, well, we've fixed that legislation up for you, minister. Thank goodness.

CHAIR - That's what the LegCo does.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Have you got any appetite for advocacy on that?

Ms O'CONNOR - Helped you do the right thing.

CHAIR - Order, order.

Mr VINCENT - We do that all the time. Like I was saying, it's a continual conversation almost on a daily basis about that and we have a lot of representation coming from different areas -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Not on tiny homes, though.

Mr VINCENT - Tiny homes is very regular. My staff has met with representatives from tiny homes.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - That's great.

Mr VINCENT - A lot is happening in all these areas; it really is.

CHAIR - But isn't it safe to say, minister, that you don't want to facilitate tiny homes that don't meet liveability standards?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Of course not.

CHAIR - This is what we're talking about.

Mr VINCENT - Correct.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - That's not what I'm saying.

CHAIR - I'm not suggesting that. I'm just saying that if you've got to provide a definitive process, if you like, that it needs to still meet liveability standards.

Mr VINCENT - It certainly does. That's different to us - sometimes short term to long term as well, with mental health and open space, and a lot of other things in that area, but the tiny homes people are very, very aware of the complications right around Australia with this, and are doing a lot of advocacy themselves, as long as talking with us on a -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Partly why I was elected as well, I would suspect, so you've got me in the Chamber now, so you'll hear me banging on about it for about six years.

Mr VINCENT - Jolly good. Chair, I've just got an answer to Ms Lovell's question here, and this is reading straight from one of the websites here, but,

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Your financial assets must be no more than \$118,238. Financial assets, including cash, savings, lump sum payments other than compensation payments, net fixed assets or a business, funds received from superannuation and shares, bonds, are your normal household assets are not included, unless they are luxury items.

So, that savings is \$118,200 for cash savings and lump sum payments.

Ms LOVELL - \$118,238 was that?

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - So did you say that included superannuation?

Mr VINCENT - No, other than -

Ms O'CONNOR - Workers comp.

CHAIR - Funds -

Mr VINCENT - compensation patterns except funds received from superannuation, so no. And that's available on the site, and I -

CHAIR - Funds received and superannuation, as opposed to funds that you have -

Mr VINCENT - It says here, 'funds received from superannuation,' so financial assets, but if you have any more questions that we do have Richard Gilmour here, who has been pointed out is knowledgeable in that area.

Ms LOVELL - Funds received, I'm just - funds received from superannuation. I'm just not clear what -

CHAIR - Yes. Because most of the time you leave your funds in there until retirement, and then draw down on them.

CHAIR - Do we need Mr Gilmour?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, I -

Mr VINCENT - Here's his moment.

CHAIR - So let me introduce - or he can introduce himself, whichever you like.

Mr VINCENT - Richard Gilmour, and I'm not sure of his title in Homes Tas.

Mr GILMOUR - Richard Gilmour, director of Community Infrastructure.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you very much, Richard.

Mr GILMOUR -Thanks.

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Mr VINCENT - And this, I've just been told, is part of Richard's role, so I'll ask him to explain that a bit better.

Mr GILMOUR - So could we, could I have the question precisely what we're after?

Ms LOVELL - So the question - yes, absolutely. The question was whether there's a cap on the amount of money people who are participants in the MyHome scheme can have in a personal savings account?

Mr GILMOUR - There's not necessarily a cap, but there is an eligibility assessment. The contribution from Homes Tas is - it's not a grant. If it's \$300,000 for a new home, it's to assist a person up to the value of \$300,000 to effectively get them into that home. There is discretion around what that person can have, but specifically what we're trying to do, is preserve as much of our contribution as possible, so we can provide that opportunity to other people.

Ms LOVELL - And, maybe if I give you a bit of an example without identifying anyone, of course, but I mean, and obviously you wouldn't want people having \$100,000 sitting in a savings account, and taking advantage of a scheme like this, but I've had an example come to our attention where there was somebody who was participating in the scheme and had been told that they could only keep \$3000 in their savings account.

Mr GILMOUR - I don't think that - well, that doesn't sound correct to me.

Ms LOVELL - Oh good, I'm glad to hear you say that. Because it didn't sound - if it was correct, it was very concerning.

Mr GILMOUR - Yes. No, absolutely. We recognise, too, that, particularly for, I mean, for most people, if you're buying a house for the first time, you're going to have a whole lot of expenses that you haven't necessarily foreseen.

Ms LOVELL - Yes.

Mr GILMOUR - And so we don't want to set people up to fail in that regard.

Ms LOVELL - Well, you know, one broken-down car, or dental emergency or something, and that's -

Mr GILMOUR - Absolutely.

Ms LOVELL - not even going to cover that. So, okay. Yes, we might follow that up with you, minister, more specifically, another time.

Mr VINCENT - Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Sure, thank you.

CHAIR - Cassy?

Ms O'CONNOR - I do have more questions on housing and planning.

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CHAIR - Yes, yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. My question relates to what the planning obstacles are to medium-density housing approval and construction, because you know, minister, we've had this discussion a number of times in this place. There's the K&D site, there's been a couple of developments in Hobart that have fallen over because of increased construction costs, but there seems to be a limited appetite, either from developers or Homes Tasmania, even, necessarily, for investing in more medium-density, and I don't know if you got some thoughts on that or if you've made inquiries about it?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly, there's a fair body of work being done through some financial assistance we've given to Glenorchy City Council, who are working alongside Hobart City Council with developing higher-density understanding along the what we consider is the rail corridor, which takes in the show grounds and would also probably take in just about the K&D in thinking of the logistics of 500 metres either side of a transport corridor.

There is some pushback in lack of understanding of what that medium-and-high-density might mean. In the past it's been a big block that you end up building 2 or 3 units on, but now we're talking more about 3/4/5 storeys.

Ms O'CONNOR - Multi-residential complexes.

Mr VINCENT - Multi-residential complexes and that is scaring some of the people that live around some of those areas.

I will ask Sean just from his point of view in planning as what he's seeing regarding that. Sorry, we are waiting for that finalised report from Glenorchy.

Ms O'CONNOR - Maybe if Sean can talk about the specifics of the issues in the planning system. If you go to other capital cities, Minister, if you think about Melbourne, for example, a place like East Brunswick where there's been a real concentration on medium density. They've created villages, multiple villages, if you like, where these complexes can have 50 or 60 apartments in them and have a village underneath. We don't seem to be doing anything particularly innovative like that. I'm just wondering what is the impediment in the planning scheme apart from construction costs, what is the impediment?

Mr McPHAIL - Through you, minister. In terms of planning, any impediments would be to do with any zoning on a particular sites. In a mixed-use zone or a business zone, there's no density requirements at the moment. Basically, there are opportunities to provide apartment developments in conjunction with a variety of other uses as well: it might be offices, it might be retail uses on the ground floor as well.

The key areas that we're looking at - particularly through the medium density work that we're doing at the moment - is particularly around car parking. That probably goes to some of the economics as well: having the right settings around car parking. If you're in an inner-city area, obviously, you can accept that there's less car parking, people might have less car-ownership, but also their, you know, greater access to all the services and things that they need as well. Those kind of settings.

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There is also a variety of other things that might be impediments, depending on the nature of the site. It could be the heritage implications which mean there's limitations on what can occur on the site. It's really a site by site.

In those circumstances we're talking about with mixed-use developments, if you're providing for those kind of developments in those types of zones, you sit within the parameters of your building height. There's no set density requirements. There's certainly requirements around providing for private open space, but some of the impediments might be more to do with car parking and that's really an issue that we're really actively looking at, particularly in the context of inner-city areas. Noting that the way the Tasmanian planning scheme is also set up as well is that there's ability to put in local provisions around car parking. There are some councils in the state who have put in parking precinct plans, which basically say we don't require any additional car parking beyond what's already there. That's because of its well-located nature. There's a variety of mechanisms that we can use from a statewide perspective through to a local perspective as well.

A lot of what we're hearing is sort of the economics of delivering these things, because I know this anecdotally been a lot of apartments that have been approved in the central Hobart area, but they're not progressing. The approvals process is working quite well in that respect. Obviously, there are still other parts that impede them to being built, so we are looking at those impediments in that space.

Mr VINCENT - Certainly with areas like say Queens Walk, just off the Domain there, where we did some extra towers there. What height were they, Richard? Five storeys.

Ms O'CONNOR - I'm quite sympathetic to the old development too. Nicely done.

Mr VINCENT - Spruced up nicely. Some of the issues that I have heard in talking with state and federal counterparts, is the pure cost of going past that five-storey mark with fire regulations and other things. They're actually starting in Queensland to talk about coming back down to around that 3/4/5 storey height to be able to be more efficient in how they do those sites. So it's something we're still grappling with to get our head around that. And as I touched on before, the amount of builders that can go to four or five storeys is a little bit limited at the moment, so that's some of the issues we're working through.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you. If you go to Melbourne and you go to Brunswick, East Brunswick, you see all of the growth now is in four and five storey complexes, and they're all really nicely done. So, is it your understanding as Minister for Housing and Planning that it's not the planning system itself that is any obstacle to more of those kinds of developments, it's more the cost of construction? Is that what it is, and the lack of, maybe, the skilled workforce on the ground to do it?

Mr VINCENT - Not so much the skilled workforce because the skills are there -

Ms O'CONNOR - Available workforce.

Mr VINCENT - ... But the certification to be able to do that level of building is what is required and that's where we are talking to builders about lifting to that. It depends on the individual area as to the reason, whether it's a cost thing or whether it's a thing of people not wanting that in their backyard because once you move out of the city area, most of our suburbs

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do have controlled height, or not so much controlled height, but we're not used to seeing four and five storeys. So, there is a bit of a grey area for everybody to get their head around there.

Ms O'CONNOR - Not so much in the city and there's plenty of opportunities in Campbell and Argyle Street where there are car yards galore up the wazoo. Too many.

Mr VINCENT - Well, if you'd like to make an investment, I'm sure it'll be good for anybody, but that's it, you've got to have people willing to take on the cost of doing it and that obviously is a big issue with some of the ones we've seen knocked back because of cost.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is it just the cost, do you think?

Mr VINCENT - There can be many different factors, like there're always different factors with everything involved there. It can't be a blanket approach, can it?

Ms O'CONNOR - Is there anything? No, no. But as the member for Hobart itself, is there anything as Planning minister that you can do through your Planning portfolio to make it easier for developers of quality medium density housing to get their projects not only approved, but out of the ground?

Mr VINCENT - Always say, yes, to that because there's always something you can do. When you work through some of the frustrations of builders or councils or developers, whichever way you look at it, everybody's got skin in the game. I think some of the work that we're doing, we've got a little bit of work being done on potential amendments to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme in relation to medium density work that's out at the moment. There will always be fine-tuning.

We can do the work that Glenorchy alongside Hobart are doing on that corridor. I think it's going to change it. We're starting to see that attitude change. And the showground's complex - although it's still probably a couple of years away from getting to a stage where we can start to look at it - is a very strong indication of a starting point in that area where we're going to have land available to do something different. What those numbers are and the number of dwellings vary from who you are in the process and the practicability of it, but also the number of businesses that were light industrial or commercial in that region that are now starting to move out to Cambridge or to Brighton, also allows for the council to be quite progressive in rezoning of some of those areas to be able to do more of this sort of work.

Ms O'CONNOR - So, is that happening? The rezoning on a progressive basis?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, we're expecting more. I think the report from Glenorchy may be due to come back to State Growth shortly. I can't think exactly where that report is at the moment, but it's being finalised and that'll give us an indication on where they sit with how we can use medium density a lot more along that corridor. So there is work being done. I'm open to any suggestions. I'm sure Sean would be exactly the same on what we might need to do differently to make it happen. We can't control the cost too much though.

Ms O'CONNOR - No, that's right. Is there anything you can do by way of planning directive?

CHAIR - We're going to the State Planning Office perhaps to discuss that one?

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Ms O'CONNOR - That's not a State Planning Office issue necessarily.

Mr VINCENT - I'd love to have that much control over the Planning Scheme, but I would see a fight from Sean, please.

Mr McPHAIL - Thank you, minister, through you. I think there's been a reference to planning directive in a previous hearing we did as well, and planning directives are things that were under the old planning system so, there's only obviously one planning scheme that would operate using a planning directive. What has replaced that is the State Planning Provisions. They have the same role. So, that is a mechanism which we can roll out statewide changes to various planning provisions. I think the minister referred to before the work that's being done in that space, off the back of what we refer to as the Improving Residential Standards project, that was a range of recommendations provided to us by consultants that we engaged around, particularly medium density housing which we're looking to implement. One of those key components is an apartment code which would apply across a variety of business and mixed-use zones, so obviously we have standardised provisions in that space now, but it's looking to how we can improve those, particularly getting the right settings around medium density housing and just the variety of housing that you get in an urban environment, but also looking at the variety of residential zones that we have. We have the inner residential zone and general residential zone.

One option that has been put to us is there might be an opportunity for another type of residential zone, which could be a greater density, a medium density, or something that could be very specific to, for instance, transit orientated development as well. That's another option that could be looked at in the future for specific sites, so we'd be wanting to be open to those kinds of things.

Ms O'CONNOR - That's great and I'm really happy, Chair. You're right, these are probably matters for the State Planning Office -

CHAIR - Correct.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, is it okay if we talk a little bit more about those planning levers that you used?

CHAIR - Let's move to point 8.2 unless other people have questions on Housing and Planning? We'll move on.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Chair. I'm just going back to what Sean was saying about potential adjustments to the Planning Scheme to provide for more flexibility and density in our urban housing fabric. How progressed is that work? When are we likely to see something like a code around apartment complexes?

Mr McPHAIL - We've drafted a draft code and a variety of zone options. That's gone through some targeted consultation with local government earlier this year and also a range of industry bodies as well. We're trying to see whether we have things in the right setting and that will inform how we bring forward an amendment. It's not been prepared as an amendment per se, it's more been prepared as a concept that we could bring forward. Obviously, apartment codes have been something that's been spoken about for some time. I know I've been particularly working on that for a number of years but that's something we're looking to bring

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forward during this year as an amendment to the State Planning Provisions as well that we can put out for the normal process, because I think that's a key part of what we're talking about and what we've spoken about here is that in those mixed-use and business-type environments where you can get a variety of uses and really make the best use of a site and I think there's a few different council areas that have a particular interest in that, particularly in Greater Hobart and even in Launceston and Burnie and Devonport too would have a good interest in that space.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, because there's a real imperative in Hobart because it's so geographically constrained unless we find ways to go up within reason we're going to be really limited in our future liveability, so it's good to hear that work is progressing.

Mr VINCENT - That's also some of the work we've been doing with modular builds and some of the companies. UTAS has used modular builds in Inveresk and here in Hobart City to build affordable one and two-bedroom apartments for their students, obviously, but the ability for Homes Tasmania or for other organisations to tap into that is probably growing a lot more than what it was. With the size of UTAS' operations, we need to make it a little bit more boutique for some of our own uses but the ability to be able to do that is, once again, about having some builders set up in Tasmania to be able to do it on a more permanent basis instead of just a single project base. We are doing work in that area.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. Now, what about development assessment panels - that extremely unpopular government policy that's now in its third or fourth legislative iteration?

Mr VINCENT - Which one was that, sorry?

Ms O'CONNOR - Development assessment panels. I think we've seen another draft bill. I thought I had it with me but I don't.

CHAIR - Bec's got a question on this, she's got the lead on this, I've got to come in behind her.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, well -

Ms THOMAS - Keep going if you like, you've got the question there.

Ms O'CONNOR - I mean, yes, just let me finish the question. What's the government's current position on trying to persist with legislative change that has been knocked back by the Legislative Council twice now, I think, but is also unarguably unpopular in the community?

Mr VINCENT - There are parts of what was referred to as DAPs, there were a couple of parts of it that were beneficial for the transparency with councils that are probably still sitting there. What I'm trying to do with Planning at the moment is a terminology that I use of racking and stacking the priorities that we need to get various parcels of legislation through that are going to increase the number of houses that we're doing.

Instead of heading off in different directions, I'm trying over the last few months with a great deal of frustration because as you get into the complexities of Planning, some of the people on my right have a very good understanding - even after 14 years on council, you only know about this much of it. It is the frustration of my life at the moment. We are desperately trying, over the last month, say, to understand what we really need to concentrate on, to make

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sure that the planning scheme is working efficiently. At the moment, there is lots of bits and pieces of concentration both from government or various other parts of the sector, even internally in the office, saying we need to do this, we need to do that. We know we need to get the residential standards through to form part of that.

Dr Anthony Reid on the right-hand side of me here is working through a lot with our staff on being able to pull different things out of different areas that we don't need to have in this part, and can actually go into this part to make the understanding of the whole system a bit better.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is Dr Reid looking at different parts of the planning scheme that can be pulled out or what things out of what thing?

Mr VINCENT - There's things like in the local government building - the LOGBMP and things like that, that are better off to be assessed, maybe in the urban growth boundary or the land use strategy.

I'll step back a little bit. One of the biggest issues I have is the complications of everybody's reading and interpreting the planning system in different ways. Instead of working your way down through it with different layers or complications. It's regarded as an extremely good planning scheme. Unfortunately, it's moved probably along and not everybody's understood why you need to have that layer or that layer. So, they keep looking for things almost to be conservative in saying no to something instead of using the system to actually allow things to be developed. So, we're trying to bring it back onto simplicity terms, railway tracks, where I understand if there's things that council officers or a planning person, whether it's a contract or a developer, may be looking at here, bring it into a system that is much easier for everybody to understand and identify. It's still very complex.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is it still the government's intention to proceed with legislation to establish development assessment panels?

Mr VINCENT - At this point in time, no, but there are parts of that legislation most in local government did find sensible that may well still come forward in some future bits of legislation that will cover some of the things I've been referring to, but that'll be done through consultation back through with local government and everybody else when, if and how that happens. But I am trying to get everything back on railway tracks at the moment.

Ms O'CONNOR - Good luck.

CHAIR - Good luck.

Mr VINCENT - Yeah, I know.

Ms THOMAS - Just further back on to the DAPs. Is it the government's intention to bring that legislation back to the Legislative Council or only if it knows it has the numbers?

Mr VINCENT - No, as I said, it'd been watered down a fair bit from what it was originally. I'm trying to work with my staff and with local government to identify what was appropriate and what wasn't? What did get watered down to a lot that was probably going to

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come back. I think there's more important bits of work to do at the moment. So, that'll be part of open discussion as we move through tidying things up.

Ms THOMAS - So, you commit that there will be further consultation with local government on what any model would look like before you brought it back to the parliament?

Mr VINCENT - Look, I'm very committed to working with local government as you'll see in our next segment. We don't always agree on everything, but that's part of the arm-wrestling that you need to discuss these things and work through for and against and the reasons why. There has been a lot of support towards a couple of those things and some other developments we need to do in amongst all the legislation that, certainly Dr Reid had been doing with our State Planning Office and with Sean before coming over to my office, that is very sensible for a lot more discussion to make the planning scheme better for all participants in using it, whether you're a mum and dad, a developer, a contract planner or a council planner, because when everybody adds their 5 per cent of confusion to it that's where the mess is starting, so we even have to get the paperwork right to start with on how some of these things proceed. I really am trying to take it, not back to scratch, but bring it back onto what I term as railway tracks.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, funding for the State Planning Office drops from \$2.2 million in 2025-26, then to \$1.49 million in 2026-27, and then a further drop to just \$853,000 is forecast in 2027-28. How will the government complete the significant planning reform program underway and the further work required to resolve the well-documented remaining issues with our planning system with such a savage cut to the State Planning Office?

Ms O'CONNOR - It's alright, Bec, they'll just get AI to do it. Everything will be fine.

Mr VINCENT - Oh, thanks.

Ms O'CONNOR - What could possibly go wrong?

CHAIR - They're being shunted around somewhere under the vicinity of the machinery-of-government changes.

Mr VINCENT - That's quite correct. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - I knew that would be the answer, too. 'We can't track the money.'

Ms LOVELL - Is that how you're going to describe it, shunted?

CHAIR - Yes, shunted around, exactly. To follow the money we need to do the impossible.

Mr VINCENT - There is no cut back to the staffing or anything like that with the State Planning Office that I'm aware of, unless Sean knows something different to me, but no, we're trying to strengthen it, not weaken it. But, through the machinery-of-government, there is some awkwardness that we have touched on earlier in the day too, about some of the figures and how that was entered.

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CHAIR - I think you need to be wearing hi-vis when you're operating this machine, minister.

Mr VINCENT - Always in hi-vis. Most of the time I feel very uncomfortable in a tie these days, Chair. I'll ask Dani to introduce herself and help me to explain this complication.

Ms HARRIS - Thank you minister, and through you, so, Danielle Harris, acting Deputy Secretary of Business Services for State Growth.

The profile that the member referred to - so, going from 2.2 down to 1.4 and then declining further across the period. In 2025-26 there were two, one-off - not one-off, but ceasing initiatives, supporting critical major projects and strategic regional development, which was \$300,000 in 2025-26 and that will be fully spent in this year. And, there were planning systems reforms state Budget 2022-23, so that was the finalisation of that initiative as well, and that one was \$385,000 in 2025-26. That boosted, I guess, the profile in the current year such that next year it's actually returning to, I guess, what would be a more regular profile for the output. Then, across that forward Estimates period, it is the impact of operational efficiencies as they're applied across the agency more generally. That's the provisional allocation of efficiencies. I can go into that if you like, however, obviously, I note that the committee has heard that a little bit this week from the department already.

Ms LOVELL - That's not a reprofiling of funding, then, that's a cut? So, when it goes from 1.49 down to 853, and the other numbers over the forwards, that's not because that funding's been moved as part of the machinery-of-government changes, that's because it's being cut?

Mr VINCENT - I don't believe it is a cut, is it? Can you clarify?

Ms HARRIS - If I can, through you, minister, as with all areas of the agency and has been detailed significantly in the Budget, there are operational efficiencies that the government determined to apply to the department and to other departments. There has been a provisional allocation at this point in time across the portfolios of the agency, as you would see. What that will look like in terms of future budget allocations will form part of the machinery-of-government process and what that looks like as those decisions around final administration, functions as they're brought together, how all of that's achieved and what that actually means from a budget perspective will be further detailed in future budgets.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, so it's operational efficiencies, which is spending less money; but my other question to that is that other ministers have told us that those changes are not reflected in the budget papers yet, so is that not the case for the State Planning Office?

Mr VINCENT - It's my understanding they are reflected for the State Planning Office. Some of those things, we're moving it into the Building Tas where we're going to have the specialised area of that, so we will allow for some of that; but I'm certainly not planning for any weakening of the State Planning Office, otherwise strengthening it, because of what I was talking about before.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, but essentially the difference between that 1.49 and 853 in 2027-28 that - whatever that is, it's too late in the week for me to work that out quickly - that

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amount of money has not been reallocated somewhere else to go into planning in another agency, or another department or another part of government; is that what you're saying?

Mr VINCENT - I don't believe so. I'd have to double check on that for you.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. Sorry, Bec.

Ms THOMAS - That's okay.

Ms LOVELL - I have one more question on the state -

Ms THOMAS - Yes, I've got one more.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, can you tell us what the current FTE in the State Planning Office is?

Mr VINCENT - I will just handball to Sean for that one.

Mr McPHAIL - Yes, certainly. Thank you, minister, through you, current FTEs is 10.94 out of 12 filled positions at the moment.

Ms LOVELL - And how will that change over that reduction in funding?

Mr McPHAIL - We will still - I wouldn't say it's anything to do with the funding. It has roughly been around about the 11 over the last three or four years: FTEs.

Ms LOVELL - Will that stay at 11?

Mr McPHAIL - That is what I'm expecting it to be, yes.

Ms THOMAS - The government announced a review, and long-overdue overhaul, of the subdivision legislation, minister, the *Local Government (Building Miscellaneous Provisions) Act* at the beginning of last year in 2025. At the time this was welcomed by key stakeholders in the development industry. So, can you give us an update: when will this work commence on this important reform, given it was announced over a year ago?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, there's work happening at the moment on that, so I will ask Sean to expand on that.

Mr McPHAIL - Thank you, through you, minister, the work commenced last year to do an audit of the - I will refer to it as LOGBMP, the *Local Government (Building and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act*. Obviously, there's a variety of provisions in there that relate to the subdivision approval. So, issuing of a planning permit through to the post-approval processes, as well as a ceiling of plans leading to the issuing of titles. There's also other provisions in there which probably relate back to another time, before we had the planning system that we do now; also, a variety of things that are not related to planning as well. So, there's a variety of different, sort of, portfolios, different departments that have an interest and role in there. What we're looking to do is try to stage the reprovisioning, I guess you could say, of the legislation so there's key parts which you could say, well, these probably live in a planning scheme; let's turn them into planning scheme requirements.

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There's bits in there that probably we don't need anymore, so let's let them go. There's other parts that probably need to live in, maybe, the planning legislation or other bits of legislation to do with titles as well, and probably some bits that need to go into legislation relating to local government. So, it's a matter of sort of working through all those things with stakeholders. I think the key thing with trying to stage this, is because there's been numerous attempts at repealing this legislation since it has been in effect for 30-odd years, unsuccessfully, and I think that's probably being to do with the complexity and I guess, the breadth of it as well. From our side, from the planning perspective, we're looking to try and bring in the planning approval part of it, and say these bits come into the planning scheme; we've obviously got to rework them into the modern style of planning provisions and they can live in, actually, the various subdivision approval parts of the planning scheme.

There's probably bits that might need to live in LUPAA as well, that is, how those things operate, and I think that's our key focus, is trying to get that in place, and we've already started to look at that as part of that residential standards project that I referred to earlier, particularly from a residential side of things. There's a variety of things in there to do with public open space and just a variety of, I guess, road configurations and those kind of things; but there's also other work that can tap into like LGAT's Tasmanian development manual work, which is basically a lot of the detailed sort of engineering, construction, and just the variety of that sort of guidance in that space that local government is quite used to and very familiar with. So there's a fair bit to do, but we've started work in that space. Obviously there's a lot of consultation that would need to happen, so it's a matter of staging that so that we can engage properly with all the various stakeholders, and there is a lot going on, and I know I meet regularly with LGAT to make sure that we're, I guess, staggering and staging our work, so that we can engage properly and get the right input at the right time, and not overwhelm people, or overwhelm ourselves as well. So that's, I think, that's a key part of it is trying to sort of share the resources and collaborate in that space.

Ms THOMAS - So, do you have any expected - like, you've talked about staging the work; do you have any timeframes associated with that?

Mr McPHAIL - I think there's an opportunity for a lot of work to come together, sort of towards the end of this year and into next year, and that's - I guess that aligns with a lot of the other work that we're trying to complete as well, so we've spoken about completing a lot of the planning reforms that we've commenced, so, obviously moving over everyone to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, having our regional land use strategies updated and in place, and that sort of forms a natural time to say right, now let's reset, let's get all our other stuff in line, and work on that and get our system operating as well as we can.

Mr VINCENT - And my smile then, was around - we have had robust discussions, it would be the way we would describe it, about the priority of what we need to get through, and that relates to what I was saying probably 10 minutes ago, about trying to get things back on the railway tracks, because as much as I've wanted certain things to happen, Sean has been very strong in his advocacy of what needs to happen in a proper format to strengthen the planning scheme, so we are trying to tick those boxes properly, now.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. Minister, does it concern you, then, that there's under \$1 million in the Budget for the State Planning Office in that final year of the forward Estimates, given all the work that they've got to do?

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Mr VINCENT - No, it is - and it has just been pointed out to me here that in the budget papers it does say a provisional allocation, and I'm not expecting any cutbacks, because of the work that needs to be done, so I'm expecting the staffing situation, and the specialised areas that we need in that area to be strengthened.

Ms THOMAS - So you will hope to see next year's budget papers that that figure would look different?

Mr VINCENT - I think as we work through machinery of government, and bring those into those different areas of concentration, where there will be some overlapping, some of the strategy planning and other things like that, we will see things level out for next year's Budget, yes.

Ms THOMAS - So, you can confirm that planning, and all of this important work that needs to be done, is still a priority for this government?

Mr VINCENT - My word: otherwise my mental state mightn't stay as stable as it has been. It hasn't been very stable for the last four or five weeks on this matter, so yes. It is a very, very big focus of what we're trying to do, and understanding the level of complications has been made easier by Sean's - and having Dr Reid in my office, and Adele Fenwick, who was involved with the southern Tasmanian land use strategy, having that level of expertise is helping enormously in prioritising what we need to do.

Ms LOVELL - The government announced the Red Tape Reduction Portal in March 2025. Can you tell us how many matters relating to planning have been lodged on the portal?

Mr VINCENT - No, I can't offhand, and I haven't heard of anything much, but there may well be, so we will come back to that if you like. I will seek -

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Minister, I know that you've been informed about the word 'discretionary' in the planning scheme, and all of the issues that that's causing people. Is that being progressed at all with the State Planning Office?

Mr VINCENT - No, I don't believe so. Would you like to expand on that a little bit more, please?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Sure. So, people are having trouble getting with lenders and insurance providers, because their proposals are considered discretionary, and so that's seen as something to be a bit more risky. However, the word discretionary doesn't mean that council has the discretion about whether or not it will be approved or not; it just means a secondary pathway for approval. So, it's causing a lot of confusion, and people are really struggling with that on the ground.

Ms O'CONNOR - Is it causing a lot of confusion, or have a few people spoken to you about it, and raised it as an issue?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - It has come up a lot in my community.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. It has never been raised with me.

Mr VINCENT - I haven't struck that, to be perfectly honest.

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Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Do you remember the letter that Kingborough Council sent you?

Mr VINCENT - No, not offhand. I try to read as many of those letters as I can. I can look it up if it's in my system to bring myself up to speed. It's not something that I've struck from any other councillor at all at this stage. Obviously, there is - between discretionary and everything, and this is where I come back to that point I raised a while ago about a couple of hundred planning people around the state all interpreting different things. We have had raised by quite a few councils which comes to this discretion about minor amendments and it's something we've been looking at simplifying. Dr Reid's been involved with this in the last few months with me with regard to everybody interpreting a minor amendment a little bit differently which causes complications on the timeline and what has to be approved and how long it can take. We're trying to simplify it so that it becomes much more about clarifying whether something is a minor or major amendment.

CHAIR - I remember debating this when we brought this provision in.

Mr VINCENT - There are some complications around that, and this is one of our biggest issues. Kingborough certainly is a highlight because of zoning issues and a few other things happening down there. It's very much because the council planning office do get into a lot of trouble if they put the council at risk, which is putting rate-payer money at risk by interpreting the payment has been wrong. It does cause a lot of complications for mum and dad builders or developers. This is why I'm saying we're trying to cut out some of those complications. I'm sorry that I'm not fully aware and across that letter but as you can see, there's are bits that add up to the same sort of thing about discretionary that we need to tidy up.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Great. Will you get back to me on that?

Mr VINCENT - We certainly can. We want to make it simpler for most things. We're talking about domestic buildings here. It's different. What we are finding and have found for some time, and I'm sure all of us here at the table who have been involved with local government, have seen more and more developments pushing the envelope on different sized blocks of land, which I say, well, that's a different kettle of fish because you're pushing the envelope but when it's fairly stock standard, it can be worked through and a lot of it is tick box. Some of it might go from being permitted to discretionary, but then there's also some common sense points there as well. Setbacks and everything in the building envelope should allow for a simpler way.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - These are just silly semantics which you can fix.

Mr VINCENT - Yes. That's that interpretation we're desperately trying to take out of that because we want it to be simpler so we can get more house on the ground quicker, because we do know that Australia-wide we used to build houses in six months and they're taking nine months plus development time. A few of us here at the table have gone through the process ourselves in the last couple of years so we're fully aware of the frustrations. Thank you.

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - Maybe, I'll follow up.

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Mr VINCENT - Ms Lovell, red tape sits with the Office of the Coordinator-General, so I haven't got that information readily available, but I can check if Sean's received anything through from Planning.

Mr McPHAIL – Through you minister, we have received planning matters through the Red Tape Reduction Portal submissions. I don't have an exact number of them, but we can certainly look in our records and provide that figure.

Ms LOVELL - Further, if I could add to that because my follow up question was going to be: how many matters relating to planning have come to the Planning Office through the portal and what red tape has been addressed as a result of that portal or as a result of those matters?

Mr VINCENT - Thank you. We are happy to take that on notice.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

Output Group 4 - Regulator and Other Services

4.2 Tasmanian Planning Commission

CHAIR - We'll move on to grants and subsidies. There's not a lot of this line.

We've covered Homes Tasmania. If we can move then to 4.2 Tasmanian Planning Commission. Do you need to bring anyone else to the table?

Ms O'CONNOR - Is there a Planning Commission here?

Mr VINCENT - I'm feeling very lonely up here, Claire, would you please come up and sit alongside me. When Planning comes up, they all disappear. A favourite subject.

CHAIR - Minister, can you introduce your new people?

Mr VINCENT - I'll allow Claire to introduce herself, likewise for her offsiders, including titles, please. Thank you.

Ms HYNES - Thank you, minister. I'm Claire Hynes. I'm the Acting Executive Commissioner at the Tasmanian Planning Commission.

Ms PEARCE - Robyn Pearce, the Acting Deputy Secretary, Regulation and Service Delivery in the Department of Justice.

Ms O'CONNOR - The Tasmanian Planning Commission is an independent statutory authority, but it does have a reasonably close working relationship with the State Planning Office. Minister, how do you see that relationship going, particularly given your government's decision to ignore the Tasmanian Planning Commission's excellent expert report - Integrated Assessment report - on the Macquarie Point Stadium?

Mr VINCENT - I think on most cases the Tasmanian Planning Commission are there for exactly what they need to work through. There is some discussion at the moment around some of those matters, but I think Sean will speak for himself about they're working pretty well.

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I have regular meetings with John Ramsey and Claire and we work through an enormous amount of issues and whether it's major projects or whether it's simplifying things. There are some complications - the State Planning Commission has pressures on them now with the amount of work and the number of submissions on some things that we need to look at. The level of communication there is very open.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, and I appreciate that and I'm sure it's true. I think overwhelming Tasmanians really appreciate the work of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. I just had a look at the website and there is a huge volume of work that the TPC is undertaking. Major projects, a whole range of assessments, smaller projects. The question given that it's estimates is one of resourcing. Is the TPC adequately funded to do the work that it is statutorily required to do? What's the government thinking about funding going forward?

Mr VINCENT - I can say, and very close to paraphrasing Mr Ramsey, several times recently, that he's comfortable with the budget allocation for delivering the work that the TPC has to deliver. That was not involvement directly on budget. It was just conversations between us and he was comfortable with what he'd worked through with the budget for what he needed to do. I don't know whether Claire would like to expand on that. I think you might have been at the same meetings.

Ms HYNES - Yes, I was. Through you, minister, yes, that's right. We are obviously always looking at business performance. How can we do things better? How can we do them more efficiently? Yes, we have a lot on, our website does reflect most of that, but not all of it.

We, at this stage, are okay, but of course there are the overall government budget efficiencies that we've all been talking about. I'd be best to lean on my learned colleague here with the acting Deputy Secretary. If you do have any department questions about the budget efficiencies and come from a department perspective because we are supported by the Department of Justice, that's how it works.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Claire. To understand how the government's efficiency policy will impact on the TPC would be helpful.

Ms HYNES - Through you, minister. The Department of Justice obviously has a budget efficiency as well. There was a budget efficiency that was applied to the Tasmanian Planning Commission in the 2024-2025 Budget of \$100,000 with another \$50,000 under that budget efficiency process. So that's a total of \$150,000 going forward per annum from 2026-2027.

In relation to the operational efficiency dividend under this budget, that dividend is being applied across the Department of Justice. There are a number of initiatives that are being looked at within the department at a central level as well as sharing of some of those dividends across the outputs. Now at this point in time, exactly what that would look like at an output level is yet to be determined. Of course, there is the voluntary redundancy and WRIP program, which will be available, as well as vacancy control is going to be applied as well. It's going to be a matter of having significant discussions with outputs around what are the opportunities to look at the efficiencies and what does that look like at that level?

The department has announced efficiencies that they were applying themselves. For example, Deputy Secretary position is going to be abolished. Recognising that it's the whole of

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department that needs to look at how we do things better and what that looks like in terms of the efficiencies within the Planning Commission will be discussed with the output.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay. I mean that's a fundamental question isn't it because across the forward Estimates the cuts to the Department of Justice by my rough calculation add up to about \$67 million over the forward Estimates and to understand what the hit would be on the Tasmanian Planning Commission, given that I am certain there's no fat on the bone there, would be really helpful to understand.

Ms PEARCE - Yes, certainly. So, the impact on the planning commission's budget is shown in the budget papers in Table 6.2. Essentially, it's showing that the budget this year of - so the budget for next year will be \$5.224 million. That is, of course, somewhat inflated because of the 27th pay. In the following year, it's \$4.979 million. The year after, 5.060 million and 5.188 in the final year. That's off a base of the 2025-26 budget of 4.9 - if I can read that properly, \$4.899 million.

Ms O'CONNOR - So in each agency we've been asking, because, you know, in each agency you can see the sort of efficiency expectation. All of us here at the table have been trying to understand what that means in terms of headcount or FTE, which is capacity - human capacity, basically; what's the TPC's understanding of how that efficiency will impact on staffing?

Ms PEARCE - Through you, minister, at this point in time, there has not been any specific FTE identified per output. Obviously, there is going to be a range of FTEs over the department - and that is again going to be a part of the process of the conversation with the outputs about where those opportunities exist.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, and that's an answer that's consistently coming back to us. This is no criticism of you.

CHAIR - This why monitoring and reporting is so important.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes. It just surprises me that work hasn't already been done, given that the budget has been handed down and efficiencies have been sort of prescribed, if you like. I believe there must have been work done on FTE counts and where they would come from, but that's okay.

CHAIR - I'm just conscious of the time. Cassy, have you got any more questions?

Ms O'CONNOR - Well, just one last question. Again, this is another question that I've been putting to various agencies and ministers: this government's got an artificial intelligence accelerator project. One area of the budget that hasn't been cut is the \$8.5 million there to embed robots into our systems; has the TPC done any work on what roles or functions could be undertaken by AI?

Ms HYNES - Through you, minister -

Mr VINCENT - I'd love to hear the answer to this.

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Ms HYNES - I will keep it short. Yes, we have. Obviously, many safeguards, all sorts of governance, everything under the world to ensure whatever we do do, and what are improvements - are the right ones and are used in the right way. Obviously, yes, we do operate as an independent organisation and yes, we have our statutory functions and that's how we roll and that's our purpose, but we are supported by the Department of Justice, and we will be leaning on the department, who have done quite a lot of work as well. If you need to, I will get Robyn to expand on that. Whatever we do do we are doing in conjunction with the department. I understand your question and yes, I mean certainly, I suppose, broadly, yes, if there are any business improvements, efficiencies that we can achieve, sure - but yes, if it's in an AI space we absolutely need to make sure that's done in a safe place and properly, and all the transparencies and disclosures in the world, given the role and the nature of our work. I hope that helps.

Ms O'CONNOR - Given the need, I think, to be precise; to be factually correct, given we know that AI may stuff up and has been found to do that.

CHAIR - It hallucinates quite badly.

Ms O'CONNOR - Yes, there's quite a bit of Claude hallucinations. So I'm pleased to hear you say, Claire, that there's an awareness there of opportunity and risk.

Ms HYNES - Yes, 100 per cent. Probably my final thing is yes, we are very aware of - yes, the nature of our work is human, critical judgement. That's essential. So yes. Thank you.

CHAIR - Did you want ask yours, Clare?

Ms GLADE-WRIGHT - It's too big, I will save it for that for a question at some other -

CHAIR - Well, we are out of time. We've got local government starting at about a quarter past, we might just push that back slightly, so you can get a bit of a decent break. So we will come back at 20-past and start local government. So thanks, you can let these people go, minister, and we'll see you back at 4.20 p.m.

The committee suspended from 4.03 p.m to 4.20 p.m

Output Group 1 - Policy Reform and Government Priorities

1.9 Local Government

CHAIR - Thanks, minister. We're onto our last portfolio group for us and for you, Local Government. I'll invite you to introduce the members of your team at the table and then did you want to make any opening comments or go straight to questions?

Mr VINCENT - Straight to questions. On my right, I have my chief of staff, Tim Lovibond, and I'll allow -

Mr HEALEY - Matt Healey, Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery, and Luke Gregory, acting Director of Local Government.

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Ms THOMAS - Minister, looking at the budget it seems the budget allocation for the Office of Local Government will reduce over the forward Estimates and we can see that there's an allocation of \$2.85 million in 2025-26 - well, that's the estimated outcome. Then in 2026-27, it goes down to \$2.38 million, and down to \$2.22 million, and then \$2.03 million. Does this reflect operational efficiencies that their unit is expected to find, or is there something that the Office of Local Government will no longer be doing?

Mr VINCENT - No, we are not looking to reduce the Office of Local Government, we're trying to - similar to the State Planning Office - make sure that it's got the right people in the right place to do the role. There was a couple of projects in there that related to other expenses which have now come out and the Budget reflects operational efficiencies, but I will check with -

So, coming out has been the \$200,000 for the Office of Local Government compulsory voting and \$500,000 towards the Central Coast Council waterfront renewal. Budget efficiency that's built in increases from \$94,000 to \$120,000 to 346, 346, 346, across the forward Estimates, and -

CHAIR - \$346,000?

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - In efficiencies?

Mr VINCENT - Not in efficiencies, but sufficiencies.

CHAIR - In cost cutting.

Ms THOMAS - In efficiencies, in cuts - budget cuts.

Ms LOVELL - Less money spent.

CHAIR - Well, less money, we'll see as well.

Ms THOMAS - Less money appropriated?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, but the base funding continues for the Office of Local Government.

Ms THOMAS - Does it continue, though? Because it sounds like \$300,000 in cuts.

Mr HEALEY - Look, in the third year there is a broad efficiency dividend of \$346,000 towards the budget. That is offset in the next two years. There's \$250,000 in funding for the Future of Local Government review and then there's some additional other revenue that goes into the Office of Local Government associated with a national program. But yeah, there is a modest efficiency that's been applied to this division, as there has to all areas of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

I have to say we have been working over the last 12-18 months to try to make sure that we prepare the agency for the efficiencies that we knew that we'd have to deliver on to keep

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the budget in a sustainable form. You would have seen that there are 82 - so the department has reduced its paid FTE by 82 over the past 12 months. There have been sort of some efficiencies, probably mainly held - applied - in the Office of Local Government by holding some positions vacant over the last 12 months, which we've adjusted our support for the minister, in terms of the speed in which we're supporting the reforms, but we do believe that going forward that is a sustainable and achievable budget to continue all of the core functions of the Office of Local Government.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, so of that 300-and-something thousand, did I hear right that you said there's \$250,000 of that in 2026-27 and 2027-28, is allocated to the future of local government review?

Mr HEALEY - No, sorry. So, there's additional funding of \$250,000 per year, for the next two years that goes into the office, which, certainly in the first year, more than offsets any efficiency dividend applied, but it, of course, will mean that the office will need to reprioritise its work to delivering on those recommendations, as well.

Ms THOMAS - So, is that included in that line 1.9?

Mr HEALEY - Yes. So, the two - so the 2026-27 funding, as the minister said, it's does see the drop off of \$700,000, because of compulsory voting, and the one-off funding that was provided to the Central Coast Council waterfront renewal program. It sees an addition of \$250,000 - this is 2026-27 we're talking about - there's an addition of \$250,000 for the Future of Local Government review priority reform program. There is an efficiency dividend of \$221,000, and then there's some additional funding that that comes in from a Commonwealth recreational fishing and camping program. So, that's the net total of what impacts on the total funding for the office.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. How many FTEs are there in the Office of Local Government?

Mr HEALEY - At the moment, I'll tell you how many we've actually got employed in the office, versus how many is within the establishment. So, at 31 March, there's 8.6 FTEs being paid and that's about four less than what's in their establishment who can be recruited into, over time once the Budget settles. And, of course, once the office moves into the Department of Justice, we'll be able to recruit back into those roles. So, it is - the office is holding a reasonable number of vacancies at the moment.

Ms THOMAS - Okay. So, can you confirm that the Office of Local Government's full Budget allocation, including the \$250,000 that's allocated to the reform program, will go across in the machinery-of-government changes? I understand the Office of Local Government is going to the Department of Justice?

Mr HEALEY - Yes.

Ms THOMAS - So will all of that budget be transferred?

Mr HEALEY - Yes, all of it, with the - so, just being transparent, that efficiency dividend is applied that we've talked about. Other than that, everything else goes to the Department of Justice, yes.

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Ms THOMAS - So you said there's currently four vacancies, have those positions been vacant for long, and what's the reason they're vacant?

Mr HEALEY - Look, they have. We, in the department, have been quite intentional to try to reduce our rate of recruitment, just to find out where we can find efficiencies across the department. And, as you know, there was a freeze on essential recruitment, so that has impacted on recruitment within the office. We do, obviously, need to recruit at some point soon. Sorry, through you, minister, is that right? We do need to recruit, for example, to the substantive Director of Local Government role, which means that, Luke's substantive role, which was the Director of Policy, can be filled once again. At the moment the Director of Policy role is not being backfilled whilst Luke is acting in the Director's role. We also have a number, a couple of policy roles and a role within the regulatory team that we'll need to recruit back into.

Ms THOMAS - And you're planning to do - are you planning to do that before the move to Justice or after?

Mr VINCENT - No, during the part of the machinery of government, we'll be working our way through that, so.

Ms THOMAS - Right, okay.

CHAIR - Can I just ask when you intend to complete that, because there's four positions and one is in the policy area, you said - I've forgotten where you said the other ones were, sorry -

Ms THOMAS - Regulatory.

CHAIR - Regulatory. So, they're obviously important positions or they wouldn't be there, and you intend to fill them?

Mr HEALEY - Yes.

CHAIR - So, how long do you think this machinery-of-government, or MOGS, changes are going to take?

Mr HEALEY - Through you, minister, the Office of Local Government will be moving into the Department of Justice, I think it's on 16 July?

Mr GREGORY - On 16 July, yes.

Mr HEALEY - So we are prioritising some work with the Department of Justice to go and look at the funding for salaries and the establishment, and reconcile it against the structure of the office to make sure we can provide really confident advice through to Justice, in terms of the priority for the recruitment into those -

CHAIR - So, is there a risk they might say no, you can't fill those positions?

Mr HEALEY - There's a few complexities within the office in terms of individuals that may be looking to retire soon and the like, so we just need to work through all of those so that we can agree on what the best recruitment strategy is, including the best structure for the office. That's part of the discussion of its movement.

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CHAIR - When do you start recruitment then? You've got to wait for Justice's tick off, is that what you're saying?

Mr HEALEY - No. Well, we need to wait for us to be able to sit down with Justice and go through the Budget for the establishment and the current structure, and make sure we're really clear that what we're recruiting into is a sustainable establishment as it moves over to Justice. It's just a little bit of administration that we need to do before we can kick off the recruitment process. Technically, we could initiate a recruitment process in DPAC, but given the timing, I suspect the best would be that Justice would initiate that recruitment process as part of the transition into the department. But there is no plan to be cutting the Office of Local Government as part of the movement of -

CHAIR - There's no provision for any redundancies or separation costs other than people who are going to retire anyway?

Mr HEALEY - No, that's right. That's right. It's just about the responsible move of the function from DPAC into Justice, making sure we're being clear and transparent with Justice as to what's coming over. And other than the efficiencies that have already been applied there'll be no change to the Budget in the process of it moving.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you, and on the allocation of \$250,000 per annum over those two years for the future of the Local Government Priority Reform Program, what is that funding intended to be specifically used for? Minister, do you know?

Mr HEALEY - Look, it's a general allocation to allow for the prioritisation of the delivery of those actions. There's a number of - and I might pass to Luke in a moment for details - but there's a number of priorities where we could invest further. One includes the recommendations around shoring-up the management of infrastructure-related spends in government. There's some work that we could do in that space if that was considered to be a priority. If any of the councils took up the government's offer for voluntary amalgamations, then some of that funding could go into working with the councils to understand what that process is.

So, I'm not sure if it's not all specifically tied to recommendations at the moment. It's a general provision that allows for that priority to continue, but if there's anything else we can say on that front.

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister. No, I think that's exactly right, Mat. Obviously, there are a number of recommendations that came out of the review. We are in the process of delivering our first tranche of those. We've got legislation coming through the House at the moment and more to come in this year, and the government has set out its phase plan around how those recommendations are to roll out over time as Mat and the minister indicated.

If structural reform doesn't come through as a strong initiative in terms of councils coming forward, then we'd be looking to support the sector in other ways around asset management capability and potentially things like workforce development as well. But, it will be contingent probably as we come through on the other side of council elections to see what the landscape looks like around structural reform appetite and those sorts of things. Noting that the government has put forward a framework for, I guess, managing those as they come

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forward. So, yeah, it is a general provision to support the ongoing delivery of the government's agenda off the back of the FoLGR process.

Ms THOMAS - So, is that money allocated in the coming financial year - noting that we're just a month away - to a specific initiative or reform recommendation being actually delivered, or acted on by the office?

Mr GREGORY - Through, you, minister, not at this stage.

Ms THOMAS - Minister, there were quite a number of recommendations in that review, I can't remember how many -

Mr GREGORY - 37

Ms THOMAS - 37, thank you. Thirty-seven recommendations. Do you keep a progress tracker, minister on which of those have been delivered on, which are being delivered on, and what the order of priority to deliver on them is?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly haven't done a check in the last few months, but we do keep referring back to some of those that we have to tick off through present legislation, legislation coming up on what the program might be to continue to tick off on those during next year.

Ms THOMAS - The sector put a lot of time and effort into consultation on the review. I'm sure it would be helpful for the sector to be able to have regular reporting or updates somewhere on what progress towards those recommendations is. Is that something that you would consider?

Mr VINCENT - Have been considering and talking to some on those discussion points already. It's something that's raised with us on a regular basis as we meet with councils and we could well formalise as we move around the council some more accurate information on where we are with some of those, where we're going. It is part of what we do discuss on a fairly regular basis. Probably not exactly the 37, but certainly what we are working on in the upcoming six months.

Mr HEALEY - Through you, minister. It certainly is driving the reform agenda which is very active. The Targeted Reform Bill implements many of the recommendations that came out of FoLGR obviously there's some recommendations that preceded FoLGR, which when we had the *Local Government Act 1993* review all of those very heavily driving the work that's ongoing. It's certainly not lost, but perhaps you're right, perhaps there could be some clearer communication to the sector on how they're feeding into some of the reforms that we are proceeding with.

Mr VINCENT - The Targeted Reform Bill, just what I'm looking at here. In total, the reforms respond to 13 of the 37 so far that we're working on at the moment. We are ticking him off as we go.

Ms THOMAS - Would you agree, minister, that there's a level of consultation fatigue that has occurred in councils through the range of reforms that have been considered in recent years? I think actually being able to demonstrate back to councils that the time and effort that's gone into them has actually resulted in something, is worthwhile. If that's something you can consider, that would be great.

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Mr VINCENT - Yes, certainly, it has been a big part of our discussions with our means at local government, Local Government Association, and certainly the previous Acting Director of Local Government, Michael Mogridge, when I first came into the role, had a very clear understanding of what my expectations were in delivering these recommendations.

Mr HEALEY - Through you, minister. There are some really substantive structural changes that are going through in the Targeted Reforms Bill; the introduction of the Charter for local government, the changes to the Code of Conduct. They are obviously the councillor numbers work that provides for the first time ever a really robust and transparent foundation for councillor numbers across the state. So, yeah, there's some really significant reforms that have come out of that process that the office is now in the process of delivering.

Ms THOMAS - Two of the recommendations that I understand the government is yet to progress are recommendation 17 and 36. Recommendation 17 is around the investigating and considering introducing an alternative framework for councils to raise revenue from major commercial operations in their local government areas, where rates based on the improved value of land are not efficient, effective or equitable form of taxation. Are you able to provide an update on what work the government is intending on doing to progress this alternative rating framework for commercial developments such as wind farms? You know, if there's that \$250,000 allocated that's not yet been allocated to a specific purpose, is that something that could be allocated towards?

Mr VINCENT - I ask Mat or Luke.

Mr GREGORY - Is that in relation to recommendation 36 or 17?

Ms THOMAS - 17 - The alternative rating framework for major commercial development.

Mr GREGORY - This is an initiative that I know the sector has been keen to pursue. It relates predominantly to a concept of a payment in lieu of rates scheme, predominantly for -

CHAIR - Hydro assets would be the first one.

Mr GREGORY - Every wind farm and renewable developments. This is a model that's been rolled out in Victoria. It's something that came through FoLGR obviously in recommendation 17 to say that in instances of these kinds of developments, it may not be the most efficient and appropriate way to tax these developments through the rating framework. There might be other opportunities to look at ways that shores up the sovereign risk on the one side for a developer, but also ensures a return into local communities from those developments as a result of them.

That's work that we have had early conversations with ReCFIT about. It's obviously within the remit of FoLGR, but sort of sits slightly outside our portfolio in terms of where it reaches in. It would likely need some adjustments to our rating framework potentially under the *Local Government Act*, but ostensibly it's an energy policy - I guess, matter as well. So, that would require ongoing engagement and consultation in the delivery of that program.

It's something we're having ongoing conversations about. I must say in terms of the work of the office and particularly given how we're situated at the moment with our program, we are

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focused on those 13 recommendations that are coming through at the moment in the targeted reform bill.

So, in terms of recommendation 17 though, it is part of the program of work that's been identified as a higher priority, but it's not something that we've got, sort of, a great deal of active work going on right now.

Mr HEALEY - My understanding is that the imperative for recommendation 13 dropped a little when the Valuer-General applied separate valuation to wind farms, which he hadn't previously. So, part of the difficulty that local government had in raising revenue from wind farms was the lack of certainty around a really high value capital asset in rural areas, but in the work of the Valuer-General to classify them separately does give the ability of councils to move there if they want to. It hasn't resolved the issue, but it could provide a way forward. But it's a recommendation that still needs some attention.

Ms THOMAS - And I think it's fair to say, isn't it minister, that it is broader than just wind farms. So whilst I understand - appreciate that change.

Mr HEALEY - The imperative was largely wind farms. Of course, the west coast have long lobbied the government for the ability to be able to rate Hydro, which was specifically excluded as part of a previous set of arrangements for shoring up the revenue base of local government, so that policy hasn't been revisited.

CHAIR - Despite k Dale Gerrity's best efforts.

Ms THOMAS - I guess the second part of my question there was this appears to be this \$250,000 allocation, which ideally would be used towards progressing this or another recommendation in the future of local government reform thing, lest it be lost to the office over time, if it's not utilised and expended.

Is that something you'd consider? Either that recommendation, or you know - based on feedback from the sector, because my mail is - is that still an important recommendation, as is recommendation 36, which is around the workforce element. Recommendation 36 is that the Tasmanian Government should support the LGAT to develop and implement, in consultation with councils and their staff, a workforce development toolkit tailored to the sector and aligned with the Tasmanian Government's workforce development system and support councils to update their workforce plans at the time of any consolidation, and it goes on in relation to workforce.

So given the significant workforce challenges to local government, will the government be providing any support to LGAT or the sector on addressing this?

Mr VINCENT - It hasn't been raised by the Local Government Association at this stage. Our priority is still very much about delivering the legislative reforms underpinning the priority reform program 24 to 26 and addressing workforce planning directly within that framework.

There is a lot of other work that needs to be done with that small amount of money there and probably my main thing there, from my point of view is on the asset management systems of council, which I've been very open with council about.

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There is always different projects that we can move, but we've already lined up some that would be relevant for that small amount of money and should discussions at LGAT change on that. I will have that discussion at that time.

Ms THOMAS - Sorry, so did I just say you have already lined up initiatives to use - to deliver with that \$250,000?

Mr VINCENT - Yes, they were outlined a few minutes ago on the three or four things that we were looking at with possible amalgamations and the audit process.

Ms THOMAS - Sorry. I interpreted that as if councils come forward -

Mr VINCENT - On the amalgamation side of things.

Ms THOMAS - On the amalgamation side of things. Yes, okay.

Mr VINCENT - There's some other work that we still want to do in some areas with local government with that small amount of money that will start the ball rolling on a few other programs, which will lead to other expenditure that will be required in the years to come.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, so that money won't be lost, it will be used for good purpose?

Mr VINCENT - Yes.

Ms O'CONNOR - Minister, have you met with the Local Government Association of Tasmania to discuss the capability of councils to deal with climate adaptation?

Mr VINCENT - Not directly in that subject -

Ms O'CONNOR - Have you had that discussion with LGAT at all?

Mr VINCENT - I would have to go back through notes to check on that because our conversations are many and broad. I can't think of anything - obviously that we've had an enormous conversation to do with climate change at this point in time.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you. Minister, you would acknowledge that in terms of our adaptation response to storm surge, sea level rise, landslide, bushfire risk, extreme weather events - I'll have the minister answer this before we go to you, thanks, Mr Healey. You would accept, wouldn't you, minister, that local government is at the frontline of climate adaptation and therefore requires support from the state government in that adaptation response?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly, the communication levels in the past have been quite high with a lot of the things that need to happen. It's just that I haven't had it pop up in recent times as a major discussion point from local government or through my office. That's not to say that it hasn't happened through other ministries -

Ms O'CONNOR - But before we go to Mr Healey, this is a political question. It's a question to you as minister. You would accept, would you not, that in terms of how our community responds to accelerating global heating, it will be local government which will be at the frontline of that response?

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Mr VINCENT - Yes, very much so. Having come from local government, I fully understand that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Great. I'm really happy to go to Mr Healey now that we've had an acknowledgement from you of the critical role of local government in climate adaptation, particularly. If Mr Healey has anything to add to that answer, I'm happy to hear it.

Mr VINCENT - I'll just add before Mat speaks, but it's been highlighted to me embedding the concept of wellbeing in the act provides a clear statutory remit for many of the functions council already perform, such as active transport, climate change adaptation and preparedness and planning for liveable suburbs.

Ms O'CONNOR - So you'd be talking about the legislation which is currently making its way through the Legislative Council, which has a section in it that talks about the role of local government and within that section there's a specific reference to responding to climate change, which is a welcome inclusion. I'm interested to know, and I'm sure a lot of the communities we represent are interested to know, what does that mean in practical terms from the local government division's perspective and from your perspective as minister?

Mr VINCENT - Certainly from a local - it's probably more so from infrastructure side of things that I have a greater dealing with some of those things. It is something that as I said, hasn't been raised on either side of the table at this stage, but as it's part of the legislation, the discussions will be happening I'm sure.

Mr HEALEY - Through you, minister, I can say that the Department of Premier and Cabinet is very particularly engaged with local government in exactly that role. It is very positive that the role and the charter for local government will clearly articulate the role that local government plays in this important area.

Recovery and Resilience Tasmania are really actively engaged with local government over understanding and identifying exactly where our risk is from, particularly flood and fire are, but also landslide and coastal hazards. I know there is really significant ongoing work in terms of our bushfire risk and our flood risk.

In fact, we can probably find ourselves in terms of being a bit ahead of the pack in terms of being really, you know, clear and engaging with those risks, engaging where we can mitigate those risks most effectively and understanding the implications of the change in the risk profile on Tasmanian communities. We are really actively engaged in that space.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Healey. Well, the feedback that we're getting from some councils is that they feel somewhat abandoned in terms of their capacity to coordinate adaptation responses. I'm only talking about councils that we've engaged with in the south of the state. There was until a couple of years ago, a position that had been funded by government in the Local Government Association that provided for coordination efforts across councils on climate adaptation measures and works, and LGAT applied for funding for that position to continue two years ago. They didn't get the funding, less than half a million dollars. They applied again, as I understand it. I don't have the submission in front of me, it's in a pile of papers in my office, but they applied again for a small sum of money from the state government to provide for that coordination capacity and got knocked back again. My understanding is that relative to other jurisdictions, we actually spend much less on local government adaptation

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planning, so if there's any hard numbers that can disabuse me of that motion, I'd be very happy to see them.

Mr VINCENT - I'll take that on notice unless Mat knows something different.

Mr HEALEY - No. I'll only just say that, if you look at the lens through climate change adaptation coordination, I don't doubt that what you're saying is entirely true. But if you look at the lens in terms of the consequences of climate change and the management of and mitigation of some of our most significant risks that arise from climate change, we are absolutely very actively engaged in that. I suspect local government would acknowledge how well advanced we are in terms of mapping a bushfire risk and flood risk and the support that we've provided to them in terms of hazard mapping and identification.

Ms O'CONNOR - Thank you, Mr Healey. You and I both know that that work began back in 2008.

Mr HEALEY - It did.

Ms O'CONNOR - And it's a very substantial body of work and it does provide local government with tools to inform its planning decisions. It's a little bit different from having the capacity to share resources, work with other councils on adaptation responses which is why LGAT requested a small sum of money in order to create that position that would enable that coordination.

Minister, it's possible that the legislation will make it through the Legislative Council but given that then there'll be specific reference to climate responses by local government, will you take further interest in a conversation with LGAT - I can see you flagging and I know it's been a long day and we're nearly there - we have that conversation with LGAT about what little bit of extra resourcing they need so that our councils are better equipped. There are great tools that have been provided by government and those tools in part have been able to be developed because of the close connections with the scientific community here and that's a different thing from giving them capacity to work together on adaptation planning. At the moment, at a local government level, there's not much and that places communities at risk. Do you agree?

Mr VINCENT - I think there are a lot of things that are happening. It's not nothing happening, but I've taken on board what you've said and I am happy to continue the discussion.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you. I'll just take you now to the National Climate Risk Assessment and Page 69 talks about the risk to Kanamaluka, the Tamar Estuary from sea level rise and coastal flooding. It's a case study in the National Risk Assessment, the risk to the city and people of Launceston from the levees.

The Risk Assessment says:

The analysis in this compound flood assessment identifies the need to raise the levee heights to make them more resilient to climate change and it is projected that this risk will intensify as we approach 2050 which isn't that far away.

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One extreme weather event and Launceston's already flood prone. As Minister for Local Government, have you had any conversations with the Launceston City Council about this issue and what their future planning and infrastructure needs might be to keep Launceston residents safe?

Mr VINCENT - We've had lot of discussions a few months ago regarding the reports into the Tamar River Estuary and we have a very good committee in place which the Launceston City Council are part of and some very sensible people on that working group are examining quite a few different activities that we may put forward or they may put forward for funding in the next few years and they're working through that at the moment with Pam Allan as the chair of that committee. I haven't had specific discussions over the height of the levees, other than knowing that they do practice runs on a regular basis on how to handle flood situations, but further than that, no, not at this stage.

Ms O'CONNOR - Sorry, can I just get some clarity on that? Launceston City Council undertakes practice runs and what is that?

Mr VINCENT - It was quite some time ago. It was well publicised that they - about the barriers going into place -

CHAIR - Closing the gates.

Mr VINCENT - Closing the gates and things like that.

Ms O'CONNOR - Oh, okay.

Mr VINCENT - It was quite fascinating how they look at managing that and need to stay on top of that of course, but I haven't had discussions with them recently regarding anything more along the lines of what you've talked about the height of the levees or anything like that.

Ms O'CONNOR - So it's there in a Commonwealth funded national climate risk assessment that the risk is increasing and the levies will need to be heightened and hardened. Will you take this conversation away with you and just be really aware that in your conversations with Launceston City Council, this sort of forward planning work with local government should be an absolute priority?

Mr VINCENT - I don't know about an absolute priority, but I'll certainly take it on board to have a discussion with the Launceston City Council now that you've raised it as I would with any matter raised with people here.

I was just thinking aloud there, the big picture of a lot of the Tamar River there by lifting one height, how far that has to go to protect certain areas, I would be quite interested to see when I think back to how Longford did their walls around that township as well and how far that flows out through. It would be interesting to see. I'm sure they will be aware of this situation, but I will raise the issue with it.

Ms O'CONNOR - All the more reason to do really thoughtful long term planning in partnership with local government.

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Mr VINCENT - Just because it hasn't been something that's come across my radar yet doesn't mean that Launceston City Council aren't at the forefront of this, which I'm sure they would be because it's such an important part of keeping their citizens safe in that area over, probably the last 30 or 40 years. I'm happy to have the conversation as always.

Ms O'CONNOR - Okay, thank you.

Ms THOMAS - Unless anyone else has got questions, minister, on the voluntary amalgamation - well, you know, that we talked about earlier. I'm just wondering if you have any updates on any interest or take-up from councils that you're aware of or any discussions you've had with councils about them taking up that opportunity.

Mr VINCENT - Look, about 12 months ago, using that term loosely, there were eight councillors that had come forward with various points of discussion. Some of it was quite informal. More of it was more about what they could do. Some of those are in fact, I think all of them, are probably gone cold at the moment because they're just not sure how to take the next step or there've been various media articles that have poured cold water on some of those situations. There is no conversation pending at the moment on that, but because areas like the east coast have been a constant in amongst discussions for probably the last decade, we feel that we still need to keep that as a live option should situations change or, with council elections coming up - you always get a fair bit of debate on this before and after council elections. There's a fair bit of experience around the table now in some of the attempts that have been had over the past 10 or 12 years, so we would be happy to continue any conversation that any council may wish to have.

Ms THOMAS - So there's none active at the moment?

Mr VINCENT - None active at the moment.

Ms THOMAS - In terms of the legislation, I think there was mention of it before, that's currently part-way through the Legislative Council on some of the targeted reform initiatives. The time frame for this is going to be tight in terms of it passing and being applied for local government elections that are due to occur in October this year. How do you see the timeframe playing out, given we've had the second reading debate in the Legislative Council? We will sit again in the week of 23 June, and budget wrap-up will be the priority order of business. Do you expect that we will be getting to committee stage in that week of 23 June? Is that your hope and aim? Would you like to see, I guess, it progressed through that time? Then what will the date likely be that it does come into effect, particularly if there are amendments made to the legislation? I guess, what's the worst case scenario here, if it does pass with amendments, would it be able to be in effect in time to take effect before the local government elections?

Mr VINCENT - The simple answer for that is yes. Yes, that I would like to see it brought forward as soon as possible, and as of information that come through yesterday in the other place, we do believe the timeline is okay for getting everything implemented in that legislation for the local government, making sure that we stick to a fairly decent timeline on that. Luke, is there anything you'd like to add to that at all?

Mr GREGORY - Through you, minister, just to agree that yes, we are confident that we will have the bill pass in in time, even if it needs to go back downstairs in an amended form. I've had some conversations with the electoral commissioner in respect of, I guess, what the

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drop-dead date is in terms of our notice of election. That's obviously hardwired under legislation, the turnarounds on that are quite short, so, so long as we have our bill passed and the relevant sections of the bill are in force by the end of August, we should be in a position to be able to turn those on. The electoral commission is preparing on the basis that those changes are likely to be on foot.

So, in terms of the immediate things that we want in place before the elections, they're obviously our numbers and allowances changes, and the numbers need to be changed and in place for a notice of election and the alternative voting procedures, which have already been trialled and run at the most recent Legislative Council elections, I believe. So I believe that the electoral commission - and without wanting to speak on their behalf, I understand that they're in a good position to be able to have those things in place, even at quite short notice.

Ms THOMAS - Okay, so August, it needs to be finalised in the parliament to be able to take effect?

Mr GREGORY - It would be - I understand that in terms of the notice of election, it would be a matter of having several business days in advance in order to confirm that those arrangements were in place in the statutory scheme in order for the commission to act on them, so it's a very short turnaround.

CHAIR - If anyone's got any other pressing matters, I know the minister has been unwell. We're all a bit tired on this side of the table as well, and we do have him in our Chamber, but I'm just conscious if we don't have any urgent, pressing questions related to the budget, we might wrap up a bit early. Does anyone have any further questions?

Ms O'CONNOR - I have no pressing further questions.

CHAIR - Well, minister, we might wrap it up with that. Thank you for your time today.

Mr VINCENT - Appreciate that.

CHAIR - And being respectful to people's health wellbeing in this place. So I appreciate your time today and thank you for your appearance.

The committee adjourned at 5.04 p.m.