



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Monday 6 September 2021

MEMBERS

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Jo Siejka MLC

Hon Rob Valentine MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Jane Howlett MP, Minister for Small Business, Minister for Sport and Recreation,
Minister for Racing, Minister for Women

Minister's Office

Sean Hollick	Chief of Staff
Tom Cooper	Adviser
David Manshanden	Adviser
Kylie Smith	Adviser
Jane Cook	Adviser

Department of Communities

Michael Pervan	Secreatry
Kate Kent	Deputy Secretary
Helen Langenberg	Manager Sport and Recreation
Jen Heffernan	Manager Policy and Programs
Jackie Honey	Manager Grants, Sport & Recreation Infrastructure
Paul Austen	Director - Tasmanian Institute of Sport

State Growth

Kim Evas	Secretary
Amanda Russell	Deputy Secretary
Mark Bowles	Deputy Secretary
Andrew Smythe	Senior Director Commercial And Agribusiness Finance
Kate Mirowski	Director Small Business

DPIPWE

Tim Baker	Secreatry
Deidre Wilson	Deputy Secretary

Office of Racing Integrity

Justin Helmich	General Manager
Robin Thompson	Manager (Game Services Tasmania)

PUBLIC

The Committee recommenced at 3.32 p.m.

CHAIR - Welcome, minister, and on behalf of the committee, I apologise for keeping you waiting. Every area of scrutiny is important and we lost some time this morning and we did our best to make it up but didn't quite meet your initial time frame.

I expect we'll be here until around 7.30pm, so thank you very much. The team at the table, which you know - I know you know everybody, but in the interests of being transparent: the member for Elwick, Josh Willie, the member for Pembroke, Jo Siejka, and myself, Tania Rattray, independent Member for McIntyre, the member for Hobart, Mr Valentine, the member for Launceston, Rosemary Armitage, and the member for Rosevears, Jo Palmer. We invite you to introduce your team at the table, and then make an opening statement.

We will start with your portfolio of Minister for Women. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - On my left I have Professor Michael Pervan, and on my right, I have Kate Kent, Deputy Secretary of Community Sport and Recreation.

CHAIR - Welcome to both of you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

CHAIR - We had Michael at the last part of our scrutiny, and now we welcome Kate and yourself.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Chair, I would like to begin with an opening statement.

This Government continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to gender equality, equal participation across our society, and equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from all aspects of Tasmanian life. Knowing that employment can lead to a better outcome in all there is of life, we are investing more than ever before in the women's workforce participation with \$3.95 million in funding to support industry-wide programs. We are actively supporting cultural change to ensure industry can harness the momentum of a strong women's workforce.

We already have an industry liaison officer for women's workforce participation on the ground, working with industry to identify and address barriers to women in employment. I would like to congratulate Rani Cavarretta on the outstanding work she has done since she started in her role earlier this year. With our Supporting Women to Succeed \$2 million grant program, we are supporting the attraction, recruitment, and retention of women in the workforce, especially in the non-traditional areas. We have committed \$350 000 to continue this program and to support safe workplaces with work to commence on a modern workplace framework suite of resources.

We are encouraging industry to appreciate the value of diversity in the women's workforce, particularly as we recover from COVID-19, with investments across government to start diversifying planning with the Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council and the Tasmanian Forest Products Network, partnering with the Tasmanian Hospitality Association to develop initiatives to support and empower women. Also a \$75 000 investment for women in building and construction strategy is currently in development.

These are new commitments and will be reported on as part of the annual Tasmanian Women's Strategy Report over the coming years. We are encouraging the next generation to ensure male-dominant industries are a thing of the past.

In addition to these initiatives, as I've mentioned, we have invested \$25 000 into the Girls in Property Pilot program. This is in addition to a significant investment across government that supports equal participation and learning opportunities, and this includes the prevention of family violence, the provision of sanitary items in schools, encouraging women's sport and recreation, and boosting health services through Family Planning Tasmania. We know our efforts to support women's leadership are working and we are leading by example. We have seen the representation of women on government boards and committees on track to reach 50 per cent target in 2022. Currently we are at 48.3 per cent.

We reached our target of 40 per cent of senior executives to be women by 2020 ahead of time in 2018, and we've seen a majority of women elected into parliament. That is why we are increasing opportunities for leadership and skill development by boosting our women's leadership scholarship to \$100 000 per annum each year for four years, giving industry the opportunity to delivery training to support career pathways for women.

With a new Tasmanian Women's Strategy currently in development, we will prioritise opportunities to support agencies to measure and analyse the impacts of their programs and service delivery on women. This strategy will recognise and promote women's visibility and the success they have achieved, we will continue to deliver the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women every two years. The next round is in 2023 and we've also increased our funding commitment to the International Women's Day grant program from \$7 500 to \$20 000.

Our work to improve outcomes for women would not be possible without strong collaboration between government and through my cabinet colleagues. I thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. Members, any questions on the overview? I hope we've got some questions left. That was an extensive presentation, so thank you, minister. Ms SIEJKA.

Output group 4 - Disability Services and Community Development.

Ms SIEJKA - How many people are employed in the Women's Policy Unit at the moment?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Siejka. I will just seek that information. Staff allocated to portfolios, and there's many others across other areas as well. The Tasmanian Women's Strategy and the relevant action plans on Women on Boards Strategy are the responsibility of all of my ministerial colleagues. Within the Department of Communities across policies and programs, there are 12 staff working across a range of portfolios.

Ms SIEJKA - Is there a dedicated number just on women?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just refer to Kate with that question?

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Ms KENT - Through you, minister, the policy and programs team, as the minister says, has round 12 staff. We work across a range of policy areas, including women and others. There're two staff dedicated to - or as the minister mentioned, the industry liaison officer position. That was a new position, and another policy person particularly on women's programs, but other staff work on women's projects and programs as well, just as they do on a range of other policy areas.

We work on a matrix model. and - so, for example, working with COTA around ageing and issues that might impact upon older women, for example. It's a joint effort, and we work closely with other agencies of course.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. I'm just going to move to the women on boards now. It's promising that we are getting closer to your goal of 50 per cent, but what I'm interested in is how many of the board positions are paid board positions for women, and how many are for men, do you have data around that?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really good question, and I'll just find the answer, but I have to say I'm really proud of what we've achieved so far, and we are on target to reach that 50 per cent by the end of the year.

CHAIR - The end of this year, minister?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, the end of this year we will reach our 50 per cent, yes. We're currently at 48 per cent of representation. So while the 2021 progress report will be released later this year, I can advise that our progress to date shows that as of 30 June 2021, there were 116 active government boards and committees, women held 456 out of the 945 positions on Tasmanian government boards and committees, women held 34.5 per cent of Chair positions, so that's 38 out of 110 positions, and 50 per cent of deputy Chair positions, so that's five out of 10 positions there.

CHAIR - I have another question about - I'll wait till you got the answer, but I have questions about that as well.

Ms HOWLETT - So of the 945 positions on government boards and committees, 47 women and 45 men held two or more appointments, and in addition to the data reported to support our gender equality target in terms of remuneration 95 boards and committees provided remuneration to their members. Women held 50.4 per cent of positions, 281 out of 558 positions.

Ms SIEJKA - So they had 50.4 per cent of the paid -

Ms HOWLETT - Through annual sitting fees. Women received a total of \$4 033 601 in annual fees, while men received \$4 080 130 in annual fees, so a regional analysis shows that women from southern Tasmania make up 70.8 per cent of board members. The member for Launceston was asking that. The second highest percentage of women reside in the north of Tasmania, which is 17.1 per cent, followed by the northwest coast of 6.4 per cent.

Ms SIEJKA - The other question in relation to that was how many, having been on some of these boards, and I know that they recruit externally and that sort of thing, but how many of the women on these boards are Tasmanian residents.

Ms HOWLETT - I have an answer to that, interstate there are 5.7 per cent that make that up, of interstate positions. Kate, would you like to add anything further to that?

Ms SIEJKA - So that was 5.7 per cent of the women are interstate, not overall?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes that 5.7 per cent is overall. Yes, correct.

Ms SIEJKA - We don't know the women?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just ask Kate if she can provide that information.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I think Ms Palmer had a question, thank you.

Mrs PALMER - Yes, I did. Minister you mentioned in your overview of the women in building and construction strategy, can you outline for the committee how this strategy will work.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her interest in seeing more diversity in the building and construction sector, in particular, more women. As Minister for Women I'm proud that our government recognises the importance of increasing opportunities for women in the workforce and leadership positions, promoting and recognising the contribution of Tasmanian women, ensuring the impacts of COVID-19 on women are addressed.

As part of our election commitments earlier in the year we announced an investment of \$75 000 to develop a specifically women in building and construction strategy to help raise awareness of career options in this field. We're looking at how we can work to deliver on this, as we know it's a field that is traditionally dominated by men. I'm really pleased to announce today, as I mentioned in my opening statement, that keystone Tasmania, which is the states building industry training body, has agreed to partner with us in this critical work, and has committed matching funding to support timely and practical outcomes for this strategy.

We will look at reasons why women aren't entering this sector, such as workplace setups, culture, and also flexibility with working hours as well. This strategy will help raise awareness of career options for women in the building and construction sector that will reduce barriers to working in the industry and recruit and retain women in trades and management roles across the sector.

Tasmania's building and construction industry is going from strength to strength and it's so important that women are part of this economic powerhouse. We are seeking input from industry bodies, individuals, groups, and organisations at all levels, and the broader Tasmanian community as we start to work through this to create meaningful change for Tasmanian women and girls. I'd like to thank Karin Matherson, chief executive officer of Keystone Tasmania, and the Keystone board for their commitment to this strategy. We will only create meaningful change if we have an industry and a government working together, and I look forward to working with keystone Tasmania and other organisations in this space, to make sure that we see more women stepping into this career pathway.

CHAIR - So do you see a time frame around that, minister. Is there actually a time frame around when we might actually see some pilot projects if you like, on the ground.

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Ms HOWLETT - We're actually launching this today to go out and consult with the industry.

CHAIR - So there's no time frame around what you expect?

Ms HOWLETT - I expect we will have a report in by June 2022.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - It was asked in the Legislative Council Chamber the other day, and it's quite relevant to this. That is gender impact assessment when considering new policies and budget papers. Is the Government looking toward that, because it does happen in other jurisdictions, so I'm interested to hear what might be happening with regard to gender impact assessments?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. In relation to a specific gender budget statement I'm aware that this has occurred in other jurisdictions, including the Commonwealth recently. During the Premier's budget speech, he outlined a number of initiatives in this budget which were targeted at improving opportunities for women.

I was asked about this matter in the Legislative Council last week, and I did place on record my intention to advocate for a gender budget statement in the next budget. I recognise that this is just not a matter for women, and this Government will continue to explore new and existing ways to support meaningful change for women and girls in the development of the new women strategy, and that's due to be released at the end of this year. We're currently working through that to that end

Mr VALENTINE - It's important to see that happen and I'm a bloke.

CHAIR - Following on from the former bloke on the committee, the former member for Windermere, have you considered a men's policy in this same area?

Ms HOWLETT - Our gender budget does include men in it.

CHAIR - He's obviously made his impact after 18 years. Kate, do you have anything that you would like to add to that? If there are no further questions in this particular area, then we'll move to your area of responsibility as the minister for small business.

Minister for Small Business

Ms HOWLETT - Could you allow me to get my adviser here, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you, we might just suspend the broadcast while we gather another lot of people, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Sorry, I had an hour allocated for that.

Ms SIEJKA - I had a whole bunch of questions, but I just couldn't get them all in.

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CHAIR - You have new people at the table. Would you be kind enough to introduce them and then provide us with your overview and then we'll get into the questions, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much Chair. To my left I have the secretary of the Department of State Growth, Mr Kim Evans, and to my right I have the deputy secretary, Mr Mark Bowles.

CHAIR - Welcome, both very familiar with the Estimates process.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

With more than 39 000 small businesses employing over 100 000 people around the state we know that small business is the engine room to our economy. One of the key priorities of the Tasmanian Liberal Government is jobs, and one of the key ways we deliver that is by ensuring small business remains our economy's powerhouse. Under our long-term plan, before COVID-19 hit, thousands more Tasmanians had been employed since March 2014. And even with the impact of COVID-19, our employment participation rate has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government is helping to grow the economy and create jobs, by supporting businesses to develop a skilled workforce; assisting with market access; unlocking investment opportunities in Tasmania; cutting red tape; and delivering the infrastructure our community and businesses need. Thank you, Chair. I'll open for questions.

CHAIR - All right, thank you. Of those 100 000 employees in small business - do you have any statistics around under-employment? That's an issue that's raised with me, and the member for Launceston will drill down further into it.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just seek some advice.

Mr BOWLES - Through the minister, the under-employment and unemployment figures are available only at a state-wide level, or, in some instances, geographic. They're not actually attached to business types in the ABS data. For example, we can't say that of the employees that are employed by small businesses, X amount are under-employed or become unemployed directly. It's not available through the ABS standard publications.

CHAIR - That brings me to the peak body support fund. Given that this funding area is to support the peak body, is that data available from them? Do they let government know how the businesses are going, and what their employment looks like as a small business?

Ms HOWLETT - The peak bodies are extremely important. In the 2020-21 Budget, funding of \$500 000 was announced to support peak bodies and industry associations, to support small business in their recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This fund, administered via a grant program, aimed to assist small businesses by funding support programs and activities, and projects undertaken by peak bodies and industry associations to assist their respective small business members to recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

Projects funded under this program must commence before 1 November 2021, and be completed within 12 months from commencement. A total of half a million dollars was available under this fund, via grants of up to \$25 000 per peak body or industry association, to

deliver on one or more of the following objectives: enable peak bodies to increase their capacity and/or capability to deliver support to its small business members; enhance, increase or expand on existing support programs or activities aimed at small businesses and their recovery from COVID-19; develop and implement new small business support programs that contribute to small business COVID-19 recovery, and/or small business resilience; improve access for small businesses to support offered by the respective peak body or industry association; increase information sharing and support networks between members and industry participants; and also encourage collaboration and drive networking opportunities between businesses, organisations, and industries.

Funding was only available to new projects, or to enhance or extend an existing project. Funds will not be provided to any project, project enhancement or extension that has already been or will be funded by a government body or third-party organisation. Six applications were submitted under this program, and only four were eligible. The Department of State Growth is working with eligible organisations on their grant funding arrangements. State Growth is also looking at how best to utilise the remaining funding, to enable peak bodies and industry associations to support small business in the recovery from COVID-19. Mark, would you like to expand on that?

Mr BOWLES - Just to add, through the minister, that we're currently working through the TCCI's Chamber Alliance Organisation, to identify the most effective and fair way of distributing those funds through those local chambers.

CHAIR - At this point in time, only been four applications have been approved?

Ms HOWLETT - That's correct. Six applications were submitted under this program.

CHAIR - And a maximum of \$25 000?

Ms HOWLETT - And only four were eligible under this - yes, grants of up \$25 000.

CHAIR - Have you expended \$100 000?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just seek some information.

Mr EVANS - The minister would need to take that on notice. The officers tell me that some funding went to the Seafood Industry Council and/or Flinders Island organisation. But I would rather go away and check those facts.

CHAIR - To our secretariat, we have a question on notice: who were the four successful applicants, and what was the quantum that was received? Was it the full \$25 000 to each peak body? Thank you.

Obviously, recovery has been rapid, but I note there's no forward projection. So, is the Government looking to extend the COVID-19 response initiative beyond 2022, if necessary?

Ms HOWLETT - As the Premier and I have stated, we will always listen to feedback from businesses, and if there's a need to do so, then we will.

CHAIR - All right. In regard to the two unsuccessful applicants, of those six applications thus far, is somebody from State Growth working with those other two peak bodies, about why their application didn't fit within the guidelines, and how they might restructure their application to make it fit?

Ms HOWLETT - State Growth would be working with those unsuccessful applicants. I'll hand you -

Mr EVANS - Through Business Tasmania, we work with businesses directly, but also -

CHAIR - Well, this is the peak bodies.

Mr EVANS - Yes, also directly with the peak bodies.

CHAIR - I don't want to wander into small business again, because I've already dabbled once. So, supplementary - peak bodies. Thank you, Ms Siejka.

Ms SIEJKA - On those peak bodies that were funded, I wondered what process is going to occur to measure the success of their service in support to small businesses across Tasmania with those grants. What's the evaluation process?

Mr EVANS - Each of their funding agreements have detailed terms and conditions, and we would require reporting. We would manage that grant as we would any grant. We would get follow-up feedback information -

Ms SIEJKA - They're individual to the actual grant?

Mr EVANS - Subject to the specific terms and conditions within the grant deed.

Mr VALENTINE - There would be acquittal processes that they each have to go through and tick off?

Mr EVANS - Yes.

CHAIR - Any other questions on the peak body support fund of \$1 million over last financial and this financial year? If not, then I'll move to 90.24, which is Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Package. The member for Launceston.

90.24 - Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Package

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. First, minister, could you explain for me the difference between the two tables - and I accept that one is revenue from appropriation by output, and the other is output group expense summary. On page 345, table 11.2 (Output Group Expense Summary) - the figures for 2020-21 add up: \$20 million, plus \$500 000, plus \$600 000, for a total of \$21.1 million. On page 363, table 11.11 (Revenue from Appropriation by Output), \$600 000 is missing for 2020-21, and that is the small business grants program.

In table 11.2, for 2021-22 we have a total of \$5.737 million, with the Small Business Sustainability Assistance Package of \$5.237 million. Then in table on 11.11, on the revenue from appropriation by output, we have a total of \$5.335 million. That's a difference of

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\$402 000. How do we account for \$402 000 less on the revenue from appropriation by output than we have on the output group expense summary? Why have we got \$5.335 million for 2021-22 in table 11.11, as opposed to \$5.737 million in table 11.12?

CHAIR - I hope others might have been able to follow those Budget papers, because sometimes they get quite intricate.

Mr EVANS - I would like to deal with the expenses only. It's all sources of funding, including accruals, trust accounts; but excludes assets. 11.11 is revenue from appropriation - that includes the cash appropriation, assets and expenses, e.g. capital. But it excludes accruals and trusts. So, without knowing the detail, my assumption would be that the difference relates to a trust fund or something like that.

Ms ARMITAGE - When you look at the first ones, in 2020-21, it balances out when you add the small business grants of \$600 000. So, the same situation wouldn't have arisen there, as is arising in 2021-22?

Mr BOWLES - Through the minister, it could also be rollovers as well.

Ms ARMITAGE - Could you take that on notice? It would be interesting to know what that \$402 000 is.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I just add to that, too, member. Some funding went to event and infrastructure programs as well, and the remainder has been rolled over. However, we will seek some more information.

Ms ARMITAGE - That would be good for that one. Thank you. I note that the budget allocates significantly less in 2022-23, down to \$130 000 from \$4.8 million. I accept that there won't be a need, or hopefully won't be a need, for funds like these in the coming months and years. However, what plan is there to support business in the event of another pandemic-related event?

Ms HOWLETT - We have a package that State Growth has been working on if we were to go into lockdown. I certainly hope that is not the case, but if that situation does occur, then we do have a package in place for small businesses.

Mr VALENTINE - Can I ask what the size of that package is?

CHAIR - Would you like to add to that, secretary?

Mr EVANS - I was just going to make the point, minister, that, consistent with what the Premier has said and the minister has said earlier, we will continue to monitor the circumstances and we'll respond with specific programs on an as needs basis.

Mr VALENTINE - There an amount in the budget, isn't there, for that sort of eventuality?

Mr EVANS - An amount that the Premier or the Treasurer holds.

Mr VALENTINE - Can you remember the quantum?

Mr EVANS - \$300 million?

Mr VALENTINE - It is \$300 million. I thought so. That's why I said it.

Mr EVANS - That's what the Treasurer said in the Budget Speech.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Thank you for that.

Mr EVANS - That's available to respond as circumstances change.

CHAIR - Some would say that we're not in lockdown, but we do have a lockout situation at this point in time, and some businesses are heavily reliant on visitors to the state. Is there work being done with the business community about who is directly affected right now?

Ms HOWLETT - We have certainly taken into consideration the feedback we've had from businesses and from industry bodies, and that's why we announced a \$20 million COVID-19 Small Business Sustainability and Recovery Assistance Package to help small businesses across a number of sectors to sustain themselves and recover. It's been really important. We've also listened to the feedback from that. We've put over \$2.5 million into the bank accounts of small businesses that absolutely need it right now.

We've since opened our micro-grants program on Friday. That didn't open until midday. I can seek the number of applicants that we have already.

CHAIR - From midday Friday?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. Yes, State Growth has worked incredibly hard.

Ms ARMITAGE - Minister, it did take some time for the Government to acknowledge the needs of microbusinesses. Is there any indication of microbusinesses that might have been wound up as a result of COVID-19 but may have survived if the grant relief had been available sooner?

Ms HOWLETT - The Government acted very quickly in response to business feedback. We listened; and the Premier said we would continue to listen and adapt grants when necessary. That's why we lowered the threshold from \$50 000 down to \$25 000, to include those smaller microbusinesses like the Salamanca stallholders, wedding photographers, makeup artists, et cetera. Mark, I believe you some additional data on that.

Mr BOWLES - The number of applications approved so far under the microbusiness grant program is 48, totalling \$167 000. Under that, 16 businesses were for \$1000 grants, so they were the businesses with revenue of between \$25 000 and \$50 000. since Friday, three businesses were approved for \$2000 grants, and 29 for \$5000 grants.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Are the lists are available?

CHAIR - I think we asked last year. We didn't get very far.

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Mr EVANS - We are not making public the details of the individual businesses. We can provide, in due course, aggregated information by sector, by region. We can cut the data in a number of different ways, but - consistent with the practice last year - we won't be releasing the individual grant holders.

CHAIR - I hope you appreciate we're consistent with our questioning. We still ask.

Mr EVANS - Yes.

Mr VALENTINE - Are you lobbying the federal government with regard to JobKeeper, going forward?

Ms HOWLETT - The Premier stated this morning that he had spoken to the Prime Minister earlier this week. He hasn't had a formal response, but he will have more discussions with him later this week. As you're aware, the Acting Premier wrote to the Prime Minister, as he stated in parliament last week.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. That's good to know. A lot of businesses are doing it tough.

CHAIR - A \$1000 grant is somewhat of a token compared to the revenue they are forgoing. It's acknowledged that it's government assistance, but it doesn't go very far.

Ms HOWLETT - I understand that and I acknowledge that a lot of businesses are doing it tough. A lot of businesses are doing well. We will continue to listen and if more work needs to be done, we'll certainly do it.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm sure they'd like to be trading themselves out of these circumstances.

Ms HOWLETT - Without a doubt.

Ms SIEJKA - I wanted to ask a couple of questions.

CHAIR - Supplementary, Ms Siejka?

Ms SIEJKA - On that advocacy to the federal government, I wondered what you had done or will you also undertake to advocate for the extension of JobKeeper?

Ms HOWLETT - The Acting Premier advocated for that last week and, as was stated, the Premier has had conversations and he will continue those conversations.

Ms SIEJKA - But given the current health of small business with the lockdowns and lockouts, is that something that you also are keen to contribute to?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe that we are acting swiftly to respond to what many businesses are telling us and we have got funds out the door. We've got over \$2.5 million out the door in a matter of two weeks, as that microgrant program only opened on Friday at lunchtime. Let's wait and see the feedback that we get from businesses, and if we need to do more, then we will.

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Ms SIEJKA - It would be certainly good to hear an update on that later in the year when you have more of an idea of how it's tracking. It would be useful to the Chamber.

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely; and it will be really interesting to see the impact our travel vouchers have had throughout Tasmania.

CHAIR - That regional breakdown that has been offered would be very useful, because that gives us an indication of what's happening around our own electorates and where we need to put a focus.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, certainly.

Mr EVANS - It's probably worth waiting until this latest scheme has closed and we've completed the assessments.

Ms SIEJKA - When is that, sorry?

Ms HOWLETT - The microbusiness grant program actually opened at 2 pm on Friday. Sorry, I think I stated 12 noon. I'd just like to correct the record, and it closes on 27 September.

CHAIR - It allows the departments to have their lunch before you let them have the influx.

Ms HOWLETT - Clearly. They have done very well, I must admit, assessing.

CHAIR - Minister, everybody is working extremely hard to do what they can, including -

Ms HOWLETT - Everyone is. Every single department.

CHAIR - including most of the members.

Ms HOWLETT - You're right, elected members I think are working harder than they ever have before.

CHAIR - I'll go to the other end of the table, and that's Ms Palmer, thank you.

Ms PALMER - Minister, what support is being provided to small business around the implementation of the Check-in Tas app?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. In March 2021, the Government allocated \$2 million to provide Check-in Tas education and support services to Tasmanian businesses, and you would have seen the advertising campaign that's on TV now also. That's been a great initiative.

Since 1 May 2021, many Tasmanian businesses, events, and organisations have been required to use the Check-in Tas app to collect contact information about everyone who spends time at their premises. The Department of State Growth Small Business Unit, including Business Tasmania, has been providing ongoing educational support and advice about the Check-in Tas app, by phone, online, or face-to-face. A dedicated call centre was established

in late March 2021 by Business Tasmania, to answer Check-in app related inquiries and to offer assistance with the registration process.

Throughout April and May 2021, representatives from the Check-in Tas app project team visited 40 regional Tasmanian towns and cities providing free face-to-face support to mandated businesses. Representatives provided personalised, educational support to over 1000 business and event organisations. This support included visiting businesses on King Island and in your electorate, Chair, Flinders Island. Compliance in regional areas was really high, which is really good to know, and the Department of State Growth Small Business Unit, including Business Tasmania, will continue to work closely with the Department of Health to ensure businesses remain informed of changes to contact tracing, and Public Health directions.

On 31 July, a new Public Health direction came into effect, which requires more businesses to use Check-in Tas. A flyer highlighting the expanded list of businesses required to use the app and other important changes was mailed to over 25 000 businesses in July. Business Tasmania has also contacted many businesses across the state by email, in their newsletter, and social media, as well as working with our valued industry stakeholders such as the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Tasmanian Small Business Council, regional chambers of commerce, local government, and industry bodies to promote these changes.

Regular promotion will continue to occur across Business Tasmania's social media, newsletters, and website as the situation evolves. The Small Business Unit, via Business Tasmania, will continue support to strengthen the use of the Check-in Tas app amongst businesses and organisations. This will be done via campaigns directly targeting businesses in specific industries such as hospitality, health, fitness, and beauty. Industry-specific, best practice tools and resources are also being developed to assist business use the app in an optimal way and this will support business to adopt approaches that work for them while maximising customer check ins.

Providing resources for businesses, venues, and events that demonstrate and encourage best practice for displaying QR codes, signature, and other Check-in Tas related materials will continue as businesses navigate their way through this new COVID-19 world. As of Wednesday 1 September, more than 38 380 venues have registered for a QR code and the total check-ins around the state is more than 36 million. That's incredible. People are doing the right thing.

CHAIR - Given that it certainly is a big part of what's happening in this area, has there been an increased number of staff to cope with the contact that's being made around small business and QR codes and all of those aspects that keep a small business going?

Mr EVANS - Absolutely. I think pre-COVID we had 2.6 FTEs in the small business area, but at our peak we've had up to 25 and we utilise people from some of the employment agencies and elsewhere to scale up when we need to. Certainly, with this Check-in Tas project we needed to put on additional short-term resources to be able to manage the significant additional requirements under that program; and remember, it's absolutely new work for us that we've never done before. So yes, we wouldn't have been able to do it without scaling up very quickly.

CHAIR - When people are making contact they're probably quite distressed. If you've got people in the department who have been brought on board without a lot of training or a lot of time to get up to speed, how are the staff coping with those kinds of issues? They're heart wrenching stories. We hear them all the time through our offices

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really good question, and I'll hand you over to Kim. Business Tas has been doing such a fantastic job in diverting calls to those areas of need. Whether it be for financial counselling, or all various aspects that we are providing.

Mr EVANS - As you suggested, Chair, it is very stressful for the businesses, but that translates into stress for the staff, so now they've got to listen to - and they do this well -

CHAIR - Heartfelt stories.

Mr EVANS - in very difficult circumstances, and they try to provide guidance and assistance. Whether that's to an enterprise centre, or directly to people with information. The Business Tas staff they do an unbelievable job because they're at the coal place, at the front door of the organisation.

Mr VALENTINE - Is there a counselling service?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, there is a counselling service.

CHAIR - There is a counselling service.

Mr VALENTINE - What's the nature of that, is there an amount against that, and how many people have actually accessed that?

CHAIR - There the resources available in the various regions? It's not easy to access those.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really good question, and before I continue, I had incorrect information as well as far as the date of the micro small business grants being closed, it's actually 23 September, not the 27th, so I'd just like to correct the record right there, thank you.

As far as the mental health support program, we have funded \$1 million under the mental health support program, and that's delivered in three parts. Part one is training, the Department of State Growth has funded Lifeline via a grant to promote, administer, and deliver mental health training support for Tasmanian businesses. Part two is funding for the Mental Health Counsel of Tasmania. Part three is support for industry peak bodies.

Under part one, Lifeline Tasmania has reported that it has delivered over 219 out of 1000 placements allocated. Recognising that it is costly for small business owners and their employees to take time off from working in their business, the Department of State Growth is working closely with Lifeline to determine other avenues to allow small business owners and their employees to have easier access to this important training. Lifeline has reported that through its interactions that a stigma remains in a willingness to ask for help, which Lifeline continues to address in all activities and programs.

PUBLIC

Under part two, \$150 000 was provided to the Department of Health for the Mental Health Council of Tasmania to encourage small business owners and employees in Tasmania to proactively consider workplace mental health and wellbeing. I'm not sure if you would like to add anything to that Kim.

CHAIR - So to me it looks like Lifeline doesn't have near the capacity that's needed, if they've only dealt with 219 of the over 1000 clients.

Mr VALENTINE - My question is when was that from, the 219, the start of that service? It might only be over the last month or two.

Ms HOWLETT - Mid-October 2020 that's from.

Mr VALENTINE - Mid-October 2020.

CHAIR - My question, minister, if there's been over 1000 places and yet only 219 have been able to be addressed, that leaves quite a large shortfall. It's available spaces, is it? It's not -

Mr BOWLES - Yes, through the minister, the program provides for 1000 places.

CHAIR - Right, and there's only been 219.

Ms HOWLETT - Allocated.

Mr BOWLES - We're one fifth of the way through.

CHAIR - Right. But you also acknowledge that there's a stigma around people putting their hand up to say that I need assistance, so there's probably a lot of small business owners, or people who are employed in small business who haven't identified needing assistance.

Mr EVANS - Through you, minister, this is a really significant issue, obviously, and was last year and continues to be, so Business Tasmania also gets a lot of calls from distressed people, many suffering mental health issues, and they know where to go to get help. The other thing we've done is to work with the peak industry bodies, and so the Tasmanian Sea Food Industry Council, for example, has a program called stay afloat, and we've put funding of \$125 000 into that program, because they're well placed to work directly with their members, who are suffering from mental health.

We've given funding of \$125 000 or so to the THA, who also work directly with their members. They've produced a short series of videos, Willing Brother's owner was featured in one of those, as well as other support programs that the THA has in place. We've given \$100 000 to the Tourism Industry Council to deliver industry specific mental health programs that support tourism businesses. So something that's a big focus of ours is how we can help through a various range of means. Businesses, where it's not only owners, it's sometimes their staff that are suffering from mental health.

CHAIR - There's no job guarantee, and that can be really stressful for a lot of people, particularly if you've got a significant mortgage, or you know commitments.

Mr VALENTINE - The bills come in and you can't pay them.

CHAIR - Supplementary Ms Palmer?

Ms PALMER - No, sorry, not a supplementary but a question.

CHAIR - Okay, I'll go to Mr Valentine then I'll come back to the table.

Mr VALENTINE - I just wanted to know a little bit about the Tas App, is that all right?

CHAIR - That's fine, and then we'll go back to Ms Palmer.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. So in terms of the operation of that, I've noticed a couple of times that it's gone down and people haven't been able to use it, which puts extra stress on the business owners having to provide manual means.

How often has that happened? I've only noticed it when I've gone to use it. It may well have happened quite a bit. I was wondering if you had any stats on that, and any information about the backups that that system would have? Presumably the tracing process needs all of that information to be able to actively trace people, and if the system goes down and can't be backed up properly, you've lost all of that tracing capacity. Can you give us some comfort in that that is actually being taken into account?

Mr EVANS - Through you, minister, that's a question better directed at Public Health, it's their system.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay.

Mr EVANS - Our role is to educate and promote Tasmanian businesses to be using it and ensuring that their customers use the system, but we don't have any direct responsibility for the app itself, and nor do we have any access to any of the data. That's all controlled by Public Health in the event of a case, and the need to do rapid contact tracing.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you.

Ms PALMER - Minister, can I ask about the work that's being done by Business Tasmania to support our small businesses across the state?

Ms HOWLETT - I'd thank the member for her question. Small businesses employing 19 or fewer people make up 97 per cent of businesses in Tasmania and are a critical part of our economy and will continue to play a significant role as well in the recovery from COVID-19. Our Business Tasmania service is the Tasmanian's government first contact point for small businesses, and the government's initial point of contact for businesses that have been impacted by COVID-19, or a disruption to industry such as the July border closures.

The service is delivered by a range of traditional, phone, email, online, website, social media channels. The Business Tasmania team provide tailored information and referrals to a range of support services, during the peak of COVID-19 resourcing of this service was expanded from its standard 2.6 FTEs to up to 25 FTEs as demand required.

Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, Business Tasmania handled 6,022 phone calls from businesses regarding COVID-19 related queries, such as the check in app, COVID-19 safe events, general business enquiries, and how to access a range of support programs. Business Tasmania also engage with over 10,500 businesses via its weekly newsletter, and more frequently if there are changes relating to COVID-19 and the government support measures.

As COVID-19 restrictions eased, the Business Tasmania team were able to support more Tasmanian businesses via its face-to-face workshops and forums. Since July 2020 Business Tasmania have supported over 1,500 business owners on a variety of topics via online webinars and some face-to-face sessions. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic the team has continued to receive calls from Tasmanian's wishing to start a new business. For people seeking assistance with starting a new business, Business Tasmania has practical guides, starting up a small business in Tasmania. The guide is available from Business Tasmania, or it can be downloaded from the Business Tasmania website. Business Tasmania also assists businesses with information on licensing and permits by the Australian Business Licensing Information Service, grants and eligibility, employing staff and linking business to Fair Work Tasmania, referrals to enterprise centres for business advice, and as part of our 2021-22 state budget, our government is providing an additional \$800 000 over four years to Business Tasmania to assist to better support small businesses more quickly.

We want Business Tasmania to be that first point of contact when small businesses need help, and when they're first established, or when they wish to expand. As part of this initiative Business Tasmania will work closely with the red tape reduction coordinator and small business advocate, as well as the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Tasmania's Small Business Council to design and deliver support to small business to help them access and understand essential regulatory information.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any other questions in this area members? If not then I'll indicate that we might have an early cup of tea break, and so we shall suspend. Thank you very much, Minister for Small Business.

Mr EVANS - I have the answer to the question. So as we indicated there's a \$402 000 difference between the table in 11.2 and 11.11 relating to small business sustainability and recovery assistance package. As we thought, it's about a rollover of funds, so those \$402 000 from the tourism industry marketing support program, which we rolled over into this current financial year, and that appears on page 365 in a lumped-up appropriation rollover of \$24 000 505. So \$402 000 of that \$24 million relates to the tourism industry marketing support program.

CHAIR - I think the member should have a gold star for finding that.

Ms ARMITAGE - I've actually written it all out for our secretary here. But that's all right. it probably didn't do me any harm.

CHAIR - I'm very pleased we could provide that answer to you so quickly.

Minister, we thank you very much, and certainly small business as we've acknowledged here is such an important part of Tasmania's fabric and economy.

Mr VALENTINE - I can't imagine living without it.

CHAIR - We can't imagine living without it, so whatever support you and your Government can provide is going to be greatly appreciated. I'm not sure where we would be in this place without it. So thank you, and I'll invite members to have a cup of tea outside and be back ready to go at five minutes to five, and so we shall suspend the broadcast.

The Committee suspended at 4.40 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 4.55 p.m.

Minister for Sport and Recreation

CHAIR - Welcome back, minister. This is your area of responsibility as the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Would you introduce your team at the table and provide an overview?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. On my right I have deputy secretary, Kate Kent; and to my left I have Helen Langenberg. Thank you.

It's an honour to serve the Tasmanian community as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and I was pleased to be reappointed to this role following the election in May. The COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to create major challenges and uncertainties for sport and recreation at all levels, from grassroots to elite competitions. Through this challenging year, the resilience and dedication of those who have worked extremely hard, particularly volunteers, in the sport and recreation area has just been incredible. I would like to thank them, as I said, particularly our volunteers, for their efforts in ensuring Tasmanians stay safe while continuing to enjoy the many activities that we love.

This resilience has been highlighted in the success of the Tasmanian athletes representing our state in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. After more than a year of uncertainty and delays and while adhering to strict COVID-19 protocols, 10 Tasmanian athletes represented our state at the Olympics and three athletes represented us at the Paralympics. I congratulate them not only for their impressive performance at the highest level of competition, but also for their perseverance in overcoming the challenges of the last year. While the impacts on sport and recreation in Tasmania have been challenging, our success at combating COVID-19 allowed sport and recreation activity to resume relatively quickly and limit the negative impacts on our clubs and organisations as well as providing us with health and well-being benefits from sport and recreation activities, giving us a sense of belonging.

I'm proud of our quick response to the sector in 2020 through the COVID-19 sport and recreation program which enabled sporting organisations to retain their employees. Community sport and recreation has continued to work closely with sporting organisations throughout the last year, including finalising approximately 80 return to play plans which enabled sport to start to resume in May 2020 in accordance with public health directions.

As we move forward into 2021-22 I'm looking forward to continuing to support work across a portfolio, including delivery of measures within the 2021-22 state budget. The Tasmanian Government remains committed to every aspect of sport and recreation to ensure as many Tasmanians as possible can participate in and enjoy the benefits of an active sport and recreation lifestyle. Thank you, Madam Chair and I now welcome the committee's questions.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and I'll move straight to Mr Willie. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, what processes does the Government follow for its election commitments? How were the projects in Sport and Recreation chosen? Were they based on merit? Was it the detail of the submissions, the costings? If you could just talk us through some of the internal processes you followed to select those.

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly, Mr Willie. I'll just find some information on that. Sport is the lifeblood of communities across Tasmania. To get Tasmanians active regardless of where they live, their age or their circumstance, we're investing more to help Tasmanians participate in sport and physical activity. The Tasmanian Government aims to make Tasmania the healthiest population by 2025 and to provide high quality and well-planned sport and recreation facilities to enable Tasmanians to be physically active.

As part of the 2021 election commitments, the Local Communities Facilities Fund was established. The LCFF has approved funding of \$14.9 million to support community, local government and sporting organisations across all regions of Tasmania with the north and northwest regions receiving over 50 per cent of the election commitments. As a result of the 2021 state election, the sport and recreation sectors will receive over 140 commitments of which 134 are funded out of the LCFF.

The Tasmanian Government delivered immediate action in our first 30 and 100 days which will support more Tasmanians being physically active and support the sector's ongoing recovery from COVID-19. Member for Elwick, I think as you're aware, election commitments are largely a matter for the Liberal Party -

Mr WILLIE - Hang on a second. Did you say the local commitment fund was established before or after the election?

Ms HOWLETT - It commenced in July. The Local Community Facilities Fund commenced in June 2021.

Mr WILLIE - June 2021. So -

Ms HOWLETT - With a total funding of \$14.9 million provided to community, local government and sporting organisations statewide to improve facilities and capacity to service community needs.

This includes \$1 million for upgrades to the Launceston City Football Club; \$550 000 for a new all-abilities playground; as well as funding for a number of upgrade and renovation projects across the state, including the Pontville Park pavilion and dog arena; and a number of other public amenities and sporting facilities.

As of 30 June 2021, over 50 sport and recreation election commitments totalling \$1.3 million have been paid. In our first 30 days in office within the Sport and Recreation portfolio, we commenced negotiation with the northern department of communities, Tasmanian Netball Association for a partnership to develop a future dedicated netball hub in northern Tasmania, and in our first 100 days in office within the sport and recreation portfolio we've developed a

grant deed to provide \$40 000 per annum to Bowls Tasmania to ensure Tasmania has its own team in the Bowls Premium League.

We have commenced work with Football Tasmania and its clubs on the \$10 million upgrade to football facilities at key locations in preparation for hosting international base camps in 2023. We've doubled the Ticket to Play vouchers to \$200 and advised sporting clubs and associations of the extended programs, and announced the opening date for applications for the 2021-22. Improving the Playing Field grants program with a doubling of the funding for the first year.

Mr WILLIE - That's all very good, minister, and I don't think anyone's complaining about investment in sport. My question is around how rigorous your process is in selecting those commitments, whether they were detailed submissions or whether a submission was provided by sporting organisations at all?

Ms HOWLETT - As I mentioned before, election commitments are largely a matter for the Liberal Party.

Mr WILLIE - So, the way it looks, minister, is you've established a fund after the election to fund commitments that you've hand-picked. I'm not going to throw any clubs under the bus here, but I am aware of one club in particular that did not make a submission to Government with a proposal but was called by a minister - from a minister's office, I should say - and asked to put forward a proposal to be funded.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not aware of that.

Mr WILLIE - Well, you're the Sports minister. You would've had to have ticked off on these. I'm interested in the internal processes you had to do that.

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, our election commitments are a matter for the Liberal Party, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - So, where a sports club hasn't put a proposal to government and they are called by members of the government and told to put forward something so that it can be funded, do you condone that?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not aware of that situation, as I stated before, Mr Willie. I'm not aware of that situation.

Mr WILLIE - You're the minister responsible.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not aware of any calls being made. It's the first I've heard about it now. I can certainly take that on notice. I'm certainly not aware of it, but I'll take it on notice.

Mr VALENTINE - Just on that, I think what the member is trying to find out is what process you go through when you assess some organisation for a grant. Do you do an assessment based on their - I don't know - the number of members they have in their club, or the specific need, or do you do it based on - what are those sort of criteria that you look at before you say, 'Yes, that sporting club is worthy'? That's what you're saying, isn't it?

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Mr WILLIE - Well, let's be clear: it's not a grant because that would be a merit-based process. It's an election commitment.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm certainly at arm's length from any departmental grants and assessments. I certainly don't get involved in those grants; that's for sure. I'm at arm's length and that is up to the department to determine.

CHAIR - So, who ticks off on them at the end, then? Somebody must sign off on a grant.

Mr VALENTINE - Someone must say this is a good use of public funds.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm at arm's length from the grants process and the department has a panel that assesses those. Helen, would you like to speak more on the grant process?

Ms LANGENBERG - Through you, minister. Certainly, the department administers grant funding and a range of other Tasmanian Government funding commitments, whether or not they are grant programs. As part of that process the department goes through a rigorous exercise in contacting the recipients.

I guess there's two different programs in place. So, this grants program - applications are called for. Those applications are received. They're then appraised based on things like the capacity of the sporting organisation or applicant to deliver the project. The purpose of the application. How many people it's going to benefit. What the community benefit may be. What the value for money is in terms of the Tasmanian Government. Where it's another funded commitment, which is often usually around the election processes.

Mr WILLIE - What this fund is, yes.

Ms LANGENBERG - No matter who makes them, the department is advised of the commitment. We then go through a similar process, which is not an assessment of whether the grant will be allocated because the grant has already been committed or the funding has already been committed to the recipient, but we still go through the due process of contacting the recipient to find out that they are, in fact, a properly constituted organisation able to receive the funding.

We clarify the purpose of the funding; clarify the time line; whether the funding will be paid in instalments or in one sum upfront depending on the nature of the project; and then go through the normal processes of setting timelines and criteria, whether that's milestones to be met before further payments are released, and once the funding is disbursed and the project is completed, we go through a full acquittal and reporting process as well.

Mr WILLIE - So, follow-up question to that. Minister, when you've advised the department of some of the commitments, has the detail been lacking in some of those commitments and those clubs or organisations have had to go away and do a whole lot of work in terms of what your departmental representative just said?

Ms HOWLETT - If there was more information that was required, the department would then contact that sporting code or organisation to find out more information as required. As

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far as our election commitments, there's nothing wrong with making election commitments. You campaigned with election commitments as well. You know, all three parties do.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. We had a pretty rigorous progress, but you're in government and I'm interested in your process. You're under scrutiny now and it's about -

Ms HOWLETT - What about your costings that you put towards Treasury?

Mr WILLIE - It's about your use of public money, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I don't think we need to go there with your costings sent to Treasury

Mr WILLIE - It's not about the costings.

Ms HOWLETT - Your lack of costings to Treasury.

Mr WILLIE - It's about your commitments and the process you're using for that.

Ms HOWLETT - The amount of debt that you would have had us go into.

CHAIR - With all due respect, minister -

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

CHAIR - We ask the questions. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - I've got some other questions on a different topic.

CHAIR - Thank you. Keep going.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, what was the total amount expended on AFL content, the additional games, this year? If you could provide that, and potentially a costing for each additional game that we received as a state.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll seek some information on that. It's only the additional games that you're after the funding for?

Mr WILLIE - Yes. What was the total amount spent on additional - this is outside of the Hawthorn and North Melbourne deals - the additional games that we received due to the pandemic. If we could have the total amount and what each game costs.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. We'll have to take that advice, because that funding comes out of Events Tasmania. I can get that information from the Events Minister for you.

Mr WILLIE - As Sports Minister - and I did attend this game, so I'll declare that, because I'm a St Kilda fan and I did enjoy it with my family. As Sports Minister, you'd be aware that game was paid for by the state?

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Ms HOWLETT - That's right. But in order to give you the correct information of funding, I'll have to seek that information through Events Tasmania.

Mr WILLIE - I'm interested in how that game was paid for by Events when people were contained to the state, because that's usually the strategy. It's an economic stimulus.

Ms HOWLETT - There was certainly - I mean, the double-header in Launceston -

Mr WILLIE - No, I'm talking about the St Kilda and Fremantle game.

Ms HOWLETT - I know you're talking about the St Kilda game down here, but there is a significant amount of economic benefits to having an event in an area. You would have seen - I'm not sure if you went to Launceston -

Mr WILLIE - I did. I went to the Sydney game.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. Launceston was buzzing. It was amazing to see the people walking from the city -

CHAIR - Launceston's always buzzing.

Ms HOWLETT - To the stadium. Yes, of course Launceston is always buzzing, honourable member.

CHAIR - Always buzzing.

Ms HOWLETT - I know how many small businesses appreciated having that double-header game in Launceston and how beneficial it was to the community and the small businesses up there. As you know, we had maximum crowds - 10 000 capped - at both games up there. As far as the funding, as I said, I will take that on notice and I will seek advice from the Minister for Events and get you that figure.

Mr WILLIE - We've got the Events Minister on Wednesday, so we might ask the questions then.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. Look, all funding for major sporting events, including those games, are funded through Events.

Mr WILLIE - All right. I'll save those questions for the Events Minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, otherwise I can find that information for you if you would like me to.

Mr WILLIE - While we're talking about seeking advice, last week in the Legislative Council you said you were seeking advice from your federal colleagues regarding the Afghanistan cricket match and the potential for the Taliban flag to fly in Hobart. What is that advice?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. I must admit, it's something that I find, personally deeply disturbing, particularly seeing those images that were all -

CHAIR - People hanging off the planes.

Ms HOWLETT - seen on TV over the last couple of weeks. It's just terrible.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it's terrible. To make it clear, we're not talking about the Afghan people. We're talking about the Taliban and the regime.

Ms HOWLETT - The Tasmanian Government needs to consider a number of matters in relation to the test match between Australia and Afghanistan in Hobart and is seeking assurances from Cricket Australia and the ICC on a range of issues. Our Government also plans on engaging with the local Hazara community in Tasmania, to hear their thoughts and suggestions about whether the match should go ahead. We understand Cricket Australia is in discussions with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in relation to the match, and we will continue to seek advice on this matter.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - I've got more, but you can come back to me.

CHAIR - All right. We might go up the other end. Ms Palmer.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, can you explain to the committee how the 2021-22 Budget is helping to attract more national and international sporting content to Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to providing more opportunities for Tasmanians to participate in sport. Applications for grants under the National/International Sport Championship Program 2021-22 opened late last month and close on May 12 2022. Through this program, our Government will provide funding of up to \$6000 to eligible organisations for the hosting of national or international sports championships held within Tasmania from 17 August 2020 to 30 November 2022. To be eligible for funding, a national or international sport championship event must be a national competition between a minimum of four states and/or territories, or an international competition between a minimum of three countries.

CHAIR - Does that include an Olympic sport?

Ms HOWLETT - I would assume so. That's correct. Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - A competition recognised as a national/international sport championship by the relevant national/international organisation and an event where one or more national/international championships are declared or national points are awarded. Applications are also now open for the 2021-22 Sporting Competitions Access Fund grants program. The funds assist athletes with disabilities, enabling them to compete in national or international sporting competitions, and allowing them to excel in their chosen sport at the highest possible level. Grants of up to \$6000 will be available to eligible applicants, with a total of \$150 000 available under the fund.

Eligible applicants are non-Tasmanian Institute of Sport, TIS, scholarship athletes with disability, for expenses incurred by themselves, their coach and/or identified carer to attend a national or international level competition; and coaches and/or identified carers only of TIS scholarship athletes with disability, for expenses incurred to support the athlete at the same national or international level competition.

Grants for national-level selection competitions or selection camps will also be considered, and the chosen sport must be recognised by Sport Australia. Applications for this program will close on May 31 2022. More information on both of these important programs is available on the Communities Tasmania website.

Ms PALMER - Thank you.

CHAIR - Ms Siejka?

Ms SIEJKA - Actually, no, I'll leave it.

CHAIR - No? You'll pass. I want to ask a question, minister, but I also want to declare that I'm actually the patron for the Tasmanian Clay Target Association and had the privilege of attending their meeting on Saturday, at Evandale. What is the Government's position on shooting sports, such as clay target shooting - quite a skilled sport, I can assure you - and are these sports supported by the Government, and, if so, how are they supported?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. It's my understanding that nothing has changed. This sport is offered in private schools throughout Tasmania. In Government schools, it is not, nor has this ever been for quite some time. I'll hand you over to Helen, to talk -

CHAIR - Minister, before you hand me over, please, is that because you consider that this is a sensitive and concerning violence and aggression type of sport? Is that -

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly wouldn't think so. No.

CHAIR - No?

Ms HOWLETT - It's actually a matter for the Education Department as well. Shooting is not supported in public schools.

CHAIR - This is clay target.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

CHAIR - So you actually support the sport itself, given that it's national, international, Olympic?

Ms HOWLETT - I have been down to Blue Hills shooting club and I've participated in clay target shooting myself, but as far as it being - it's really a matter for the Education Department. Helen, I'm not sure if you have anything to add to that.

PUBLIC

Ms LANGENBERG - Through you, minister. Certainly, clay target shooting and a number of the shooting disciplines are recognised as sport by Sports Australia, given they are sports in the Olympics, in the Commonwealth Games.

CHAIR - Yes. Hence my question when the -

Ms LANGENBERG - The Paralympics as well. In terms of funding support, we certainly fund any Sport Australia recognised sport, or they're eligible to receive funding under our Sport and Recreation state grants program. Shooting clubs - those clubs that offer those shooting activities are eligible to apply through any of our equipment or any of our facility-upgrading funding programs as well.

CHAIR - All right. Minister, are you confident that there's an equitable distribution of funds right across all disciplines of sport?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm at arm's length from any grants that are put forward. That is a matter for the department to assist.

CHAIR - So you don't have any input into the grants that come across?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't have any input at all into grants that come into an open application. I'm at arm's distance, and that is a matter for the department and its panel to assist.

CHAIR - Are you confident that your department provides equitable funding for all sports?

Ms HOWLETT - I have full confidence in my department, Chair

CHAIR - All right. Thank you. Next question in this particular line item.

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, last year we had a conversation about the regional sports coordinators in the Department of Education. At that stage, it was too early to tell what their impact was. It's now nearly a year since that conversation. I'm just wondering what communication Communities has had, what oversight it's had of that program and whether you've seen an increase in sports in schools and sports participation in schools.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really important question. The roles and responsibilities initially identified in the Tasmanian Budget 2019-20, as advertised in the regional sports coordinator's statement of duties, have since been adapted to refine the scope of these positions to enhance the role's effectiveness. The regional sports coordinators were - their work focus is on the following three core priorities.

As you mentioned, increasing physical activity and sport options for students; improving access to current and future physical activity and sport opportunities by supporting schools and communities to break down key barriers preventing student participation; provide targeted

support during key transitional periods for students to promote continued participation in physical activity and sport.

The regional sports coordinators' work aligns with the Department of Education Strategic Plan, facilitating important connections between schools, Joey schools, sports associations and other state government agencies and the community to improve grassroots participation in physical activity and sport. In June 2020, a consultative survey was conducted across all Tasmanian Government schools. The feedback received from this survey has been used to develop actions that will guide future operations for the regional sport coordinators.

The regional sport coordinators have developed the sporting organisation and physical activity provider's guide to working with schools. The guide was publicly launched in April 2021 and provides a framework for external sport, recreation and physical activity providers to effectively work with schools. It provides information advice on how to best engage, communicate and promote programs within Joey schools, to maximise student participation. This was complemented by the regional sports coordinators' ongoing support with students and schools to access funding opportunities to increase sport and organisation at physical activity options.

Joey schools' participation in Sport Australia's sporting school programs has increased by 76 per cent since the regional sport coordinators roles commenced. A further 27 primary schools have been supported to access Sport Australia's specialised sporting schools class and club connect funding programs.

In the short to medium term, supporting primary schools to schedule the recommended minimum of two hours of time-tabled physical activity per week is at the forefront of the regional sport coordinator's work. They will build upon the work of the child and student wellbeing team to activate a guide to physical activity in Tasmanian government primary schools, supporting teachers and school communities with resource programs, opportunities to meet with the new physical activity recommendations. Kate, did you have anything more to add on the -

Ms KENT - I think that's covered it.

Ms HOWLETT - It's very much an education-based -

Mr WILLIE - The survey you talked about, is that a public document or would you release it publicly?

Ms HOWLETT - Kate, would you like to - the survey.

Ms KENT - Through you, minister. We can take that on advice from the Department of Education. I'm sure we can follow up -

Mr WILLIE - Take it on notice.

Ms KENT - I'll take it on notice and follow up.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you. Local one now. I've got a few questions, sorry, Chair

CHAIR - I might have a question that's more over-arching following on from what the minister just said and I'll come back to your local issue.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, sure, and then come back to me.

CHAIR - Minister, I'm not going to harp on this but given that you opened the door there when you talked about the DoE in supporting students participating in activities, not every child that attends school has a physical attribute that allows them to take part in a hockey match or a football match or a soccer match or whatever. People living with a disability could actually take part in clay target shooting. Given that the Department of Education, and I quote, 'Does not consider target shooting to be linked to violence or aggression and recognises that many parents choose to be members of clay target shooting clubs with their children, and to participate as a family', do you see an opportunity to be able to support those possibly living with a disability, or not, to enter an opportunity to engage in a sport like clay target shooting?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said previously, that's a matter for the Department of Education -

CHAIR - But you just talked about that in your response to the member for Elwick so it is part of Sport and Recreation.

Ms HOWLETT - I had a brief from the Department of Education. Look, family members and participants and children can join a club privately if they want to but the Department of Education's position remains the same. I can certainly seek advice from DoE for you but it is the Department of Education that has that advice.

CHAIR - Minister, my question back to you then is as the Minister for Sport and Recreation, inclusive for all Tasmanians, do you see an opportunity to progress this matter?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, Chair, this done come under the Department of Education, so I can't speak on behalf of the department.

CHAIR - I'm really looking for you to advocate for potential participants in this national, internationally and Olympic recognised sport.

Ms LANGENBERG - Through you, minister.

CHAIR - It's a question for the minister. I don't expect you to answer it.

Ms LANGENBERG - It's a challenging issue for the department as well in terms of it being an Olympic and Paralympic sport. However, there are matters of safety that are brought into the consideration by the Department of Education. I'll leave it to the minister to respond in terms of -

CHAIR - Minister, do you consider that this particular sport is any more at risk than what riding a mountain bike is on the west coast of Tasmania or the northeast of Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - I get your point, honourable member, but DoE has its position and they currently do not support shooting in public schools.

Mr WILLIE - They don't even like laser tag, honourable member.

Ms HOWLETT - I know. That's quite correct, member, for the laser tag.

CHAIR - Or bungee jumping.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not sure about bungee jumping.

CHAIR - Or hang gliding or parachuting -

Ms HOWLETT - I don't believe we have bungee jumping down here that I know of but

-

CHAIR - Caving, but they're quite happy to send a whole class of people to a mountain bike track and let them go hell for leather.

Ms HOWLETT - The member is quite right when it comes to laser skirmish. Look, it is the Department of Education - it falls with them and they currently do not support shooting in public schools.

CHAIR - I know the organisation that I represent would be very pleased to see the Minister for Sport and Recreation, all inclusive of the sport, have some advocacy in this area. That's more of a statement than a question.

Ms HOWLETT - As I said to you before I've been clay shooting multiple times and I enjoy it but it is a matter for the Department of Education.

CHAIR - Interestingly you can actually participate from 12 years of age to 90 plus if you have a mind to.

Ms HOWLETT - You can.

CHAIR - Not many sports can offer that. I'll get off my hobby horse right now but I will not stop advocating for this sport.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm advocating for these sports at the moment. I'm asking questions with regard to some of the sports that aren't as high profile as, say, the football, AFL, and that is soccer, badminton, archery, table tennis, bowls.

CHAIR - Archery would be too dangerous.

Mr VALENTINE - Hockey and mountain biking, to mention the war. I'm interested to know whether there are any specific funds going to any of those sports in this budget. They're obviously some of the more minor sports. The 'round ball football' is certainly a very highly participative sport right around Tasmania. I'm interested to know what the levels of funding are for each of those sports. I'll say them again: table tennis, archery, badminton, bowls, mountain biking, soccer and hockey.

CHAIR - I can assure you mountain biking is very well funded.

Mr VALENTINE - Actually funded or -

CHAIR - Funded. Significant funds.

Mr VALENTINE - Or is it council related?

CHAIR - No, significant funds.

Mr VALENTINE - I know they've had grants in the past. I wondered about this particular budget.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. We're just seeking some information here. Because there's quite a few different sporting codes there, do you mind if I take that on notice and give you a table with the findings.

Mr VALENTINE - I don't mind you taking that on notice and if you're doing that, perhaps we can add to it some of the sports for people with a disability; wheelchair rugby.

Ms HOWLETT - Hang on.

CHAIR - We'll provide a letter, minister, if you'd like us to.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, thank you.

CHAIR - Make it more formal.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, we will, and wheelchair basketball are obviously two that come to mind and there may be others like -

CHAIR - Clay target shooting.

Mr VALENTINE - I think, what's it called, disc golf; one of our members has been involved in. I'll put that question on notice to you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you and we're certainly happy to provide you with that information.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Willie and we need to be moving on.

Mr WILLIE - I've got two lines of questioning.

CHAIR - Quick question?

Mr WILLIE - One's quick hopefully if I get a satisfactory answer. The Derwent Entertainment Centre or I should say My State Arena, I think that's what it's called now isn't it?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - The community courts next door, the \$20 million commitment, I'm interested in when they'll be delivered. We're seeing a flurry of activity on the main centre at

the moment obviously to get the court and stadium ready for the NBL but there are a lot of community clubs interested in that secondary commitment.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a very good question and I know that you have a keen interest in that question, not only being the shadow minister for sport but it's in your electorate, and I know how much you enjoy -

Mr WILLIE - I'm a Jack Jumpers member.

Ms HOWLETT - You are a Jack Jumpers member.

Mr WILLIE - Along with my family, so I'll declare that.

Ms HOWLETT - I did notice your wife next to my house the other day in her Jack Jumpers T-shirt, proudly wearing it.

As part of the 2018 state election the Government committed \$10 million towards a contemporary multi-sport facility to be built in Glenorchy, with community consultation to determine the site and range of sports to be included. On 4 June 2020, as part of our Rebuilding Tasmania infrastructure investment, the Premier announced an additional \$10 million towards the facility, bringing the total Tasmanian commitment to \$20 million.

Following further master planning and costing, the Government has committed an additional \$14.7 million to meet particular site issues and in the context of a buoyant construction market. This will bring the total commitment to \$34.7 million. The two main indoor multi-sport facilities in Greater Hobart, Moonah and Clarence sports centre are ageing and require ongoing support from government to undertake essential maintenance and need to be replaced.

The new facility will be sighted on Wilkinsons Point, Glenorchy, adjacent to the upgrade of My State Bank Arena, forming part of a broader redevelopment of the area. Art has architects formally engaged through a tender process in February 2021 and will provide project superintendent service for the duration of the project. This provides Government with continuity of the personnel through the life of the project from the design right through to the completion of construction.

Consultation with sporting groups commenced in February 2021 to enable them to have an input into the design of the new facility. The master plan for the design is in the final stages. Timing for the construction of the indoor multi-sport facility will align with the My State Bank Arena redevelopment. Details of the indoor multi-sport facility is expected to be complete in December 2021 with an initial development application related to preliminary works submitted at the time, and those works then expected to commence in December 2021.

A DA for the main build of the indoor multi-sports facility is expected to be submitted in November 2021 for commencement in May 2022, following the completion of both the indoor multi-sports facility preliminary works and the redevelopment of the My State Bank Arena. Construction of the indoor multi-sports facility main build is expected to be completed by May 2023.

Mr WILLIE - Another line of questioning if I may, Chair. Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Just on that though can I make a supplementary -

Mr WILLIE - Yes, sure.

CHAIR - Supplementary.

Mr VALENTINE - On the DEC, do we know whether the configuration of that has changed much since we scrutinised that since the Public Works Committee?

CHAIR - It's gone considerably over budget, I read in the paper.

Ms HOWLETT - The My State Bank Arena?

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms HOWLETT - The configuration of the My State Bank Arena, well from the outside it certainly looks really quite similar. I can -

Mr VALENTINE - I'm interested whether it's managed to stay largely as it was presented, that's all.

Ms HOWLETT - I would believe that's the case. That's my knowledge of -

CHAIR - It's just the budget that's blown out.

Ms HOWLETT - Look, I think during these times construction in projects have certainly increased significantly.

CHAIR - But there would be a contract in place. Companies have to wear blow outs.

Ms HOWLETT - In early 2020, the Government agreed to contribute \$41 million to redevelop the My State Bank Arena, with LK Group responsible for cost overruns. Early works on the My State Bank Arena were complete in November 2020. The main works then were tendered in late 2020, resulting in only one bid. Following the tender process, the cost of the project has increased from the initial estimates from \$46 million to \$66 million. As the building owner, the Government will contribute an additional \$15 million to the project, total of \$56 million being -

CHAIR - Did you say, though, that LK is responsible for overruns?

Ms HOWLETT - Being the increase in - sorry, being the increase in the building construction costs. LK Group remains responsible for cost overruns above this.

CHAIR - Above the extra \$15 million that's been put in?

Ms HOWLETT - Correct.

CHAIR - Forty-one plus 15.

Ms HOWLETT - Kate, would you like to add to that?

Ms KENT - Through you, minister. I think you've covered it. Yes, so they're responsible for the cost overruns.

CHAIR - Another area, thank you. We're happy if you move north, to the Elphin Sports Centre or somewhere else.

Mr WILLIE - I was going to say, that would upset northern members, the comment from the minister. There is the potential for Delta to arrive in our state, and a number of sporting clubs were impacted through the lockdown last year and had significant hits to their revenue. There are some sporting codes that have had to downsize their staff. Has the department has done any analysis, or had any feedback from a range of sports on how they would weather another lockdown or extended lockdown period.

CHAIR - It's a very good question. Kate, would you like to add to that?

Ms HOWLETT - The Government is continuing work with the sport and recreation sector to respond and to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019-20 and 2020-21, we provided approximately \$3.9 million through the COVID-19 Sport and Recreation Grants Program to support the sport and recreation sector. In addition, in the 2021-22 budget, we have boosted the Improving the Playing Field program by an additional \$5 million, bringing the total \$15 million over two years, 2020-21 and 2021-22, to support projects that will further improve playing facilities across the state. The Government is also supporting event organisers to plan and hold COVID-19 safe sporting events and activities in line with public health.

CHAIR - I think you've wandered into 90.8 with that response. But that might be my fault, for allowing the question, so I'll take responsibility for that. Is that information for you, honourable member?

Mr WILLIE - No, because it was more around the feedback, as the department sought feedback on the position of each sport. If you have to respond quickly, you know what needs to be done in an extended lockdown period, and which sports will be more adversely affected than others, given their position at the moment.

CHAIR - If it's related to COVID-19, then it belongs in 90.8, and that's the member for Rosevears.

Mr WILLIE - I can come back to it.

CHAIR - If there's something that's not covered, I promise I'll come back to you there. Are there any more questions around Sport and Recreation?

Ms ARMITAGE - Elphin Sports Centre, was just mentioned by the Chair. I can't let this area go without asking the questions with regard to disability access. I notice that allocation of \$80 000 for a new communication system, but as I mentioned in my budget reply speech, I await with anticipation the Government's plans to boost accessibility for people with disabilities to venues like these. I'm sure the minister is aware, because it is mentioned by a gentleman with -

CHAIR - Michael Mitchell.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, Michael Mitchell. 2 August 2021. He has mentioned many areas of difficulties for himself to get into the Elphin Sports Centre, let alone where the car park is, the disabled car park. He does say he has contacted the state government numerous times for help, but to no avail. So, minister, can you tell me, what is the Government going to do to assist people such as Mr Mitchell with access to the Elphin Sports Centre?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really important question. I am aware of the concerns about the lack of appropriate disability access and toilets at Elphin.

Ms ARMITAGE - The car parking as well.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. The legislative basis for disability access is complex, and is addressed through several buildings and anti-discrimination measures. The Tasmanian Government has allocated funding in recent years for a range of improvements at Elphin, and we're currently seeking advice from the department in relation to further improvements that can be made there.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do we have any indication of when that's going to happen? As you've said, it's happened in previous years, but obviously this is very recent; there are still some serious problems. I understand you're in discussions, but do we have an answer as to a time line, as to when Mr Mitchell, for example, and others like him will be able to easily access - and even, as he says, 800 metres to get to the toilet.

Ms HOWLETT - I agree totally.

Ms ARMITAGE - It's not good enough.

Ms HOWLETT - It's my understanding that we are currently getting costings on that.

Ms ARMITAGE - So we'll hope in the next budget, or previous to that?

CHAIR - I shouldn't imagine you would have to wait for a budget -

Ms ARMITAGE - No, I'm just saying, previous to that, I would hope that it would be -

Ms HOWLETT - We're currently waiting on costings for that.

Ms ARMITAGE - Perhaps I can ask a question in the next few weeks, that you might have an idea on the -

Ms HOWLETT - Hopefully we'll have some information then.

Ms ARMITAGE - All right, thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you for asking that question. Mr Mitchell might be able to go and watch his daughter Lily play basketball in comfort after that. The member for Rosevears, 90.8, Sport and Recreation Support. I know the minister has started on that answer, so you might like to ask your question and see if that's covered thus far.

Ms PALMER - Yes, certainly. The minister did mention the funding to play; it's such a sensational program that changes for many families, and certainly their little people. So, can you just expand a bit more on how the 2021-22 budget is helping more Tasmanians be involved in sports through the Ticket to Play initiative?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the honourable member for her question. The feedback that I've had from sporting codes has been so positive; it certainly has changed people's lives.

Ms PALMER - That's the \$100 increase to \$200?

Ms HOWLETT - Correct, yes. As part of the 2021-22 Tasmanian budget, we will invest more than \$38 million with over 140 sports organisations to deliver programs and infrastructure state-wide. I'm very proud that we are doubling our Ticket to Play vouchers from \$100 to \$200, to help eligible children become involved in sport and activities, by investing an additional \$3m over three years. We know that cost is one of the major barriers to children playing organised sport, and Ticket to Play is increasing the number of young Tasmanians playing sport, by breaking down that barrier.

The program reduces the cost of eligible children's participation in sport through the provision of vouchers, to reduce registration cost. Under the 2020-21 program, more than 14 000 vouchers were issued, and applications for Ticket to Play 2021-22 are open until 31 May 2020. I remember having a conversation with Helen here 12 months ago, and my aim was to get to 10 000, so I'm so pleased that we've reached a target of 14 000 so far. So, two vouchers, worth up to \$100 each, towards sporting club memberships, as well as scouts, guides, cadets, are available to Tasmanian children aged 5 to 18, who are listed on a valid Centrelink healthcare card or pension concession card, or who are out of home care.

There are more than 800 approved activity providers around the state, and vouchers can be used for registration at two different activity providers, or both vouchers can be used at a single activity provider. Participants can use one voucher for a summer sport and the other for a winter sport, or use one voucher for a favourite sport, or the other one to try a new sport. The key objective of Ticket to Play is to increase the number of young Tasmanians participating in sport, and to get them to be active.

Playing sport and being physically active when young is key to establishing lifelong healthy habits. It also improves our mental health, fosters social skills, promotes teamwork, and helps to develop leadership skills. I encourage all parents, guardians, and carers of eligible children to visit the Ticket to Play website, to find out more information about the program, find a club, join, and apply for a voucher.

CHAIR - Thank you. I promised the member for Elwick that I would come back on 90.8. Here I am.

Mr WILLIE - So I'll ask the same question. So, minister -

CHAIR - I didn't want you to take all the questions that belong to the member for Rosevears.

Mr WILLIE - I'm interested in the department seeking feedback from different sporting organisations on their position to weather another lockdown, and whether you're aware of what the response will be, and you'll be able to move quickly, effectively, so we won't have to lock down, and then you'll go to the sports organisations and ask what they need; are you doing that planning now, is my question.

Ms HOWLETT - We've learnt a lot the first time around. The department acted very quickly, consulting with the various sporting codes around Tasmania. If we do have another lockdown, in the unfortunate - I hope that doesn't occur, but if we do, we will act quickly again, and provide the support that is needed to those clubs. There'll be various support that is needed, like last time.

CHAIR - Would you like to add anything to that?

Ms LANGENBERG - Through you, minister. We've certainly remained in regular contact with the state sport and recreation organisations, and they were very thankful for the Tasmanian Government's support, particularly the initial support, which enabled them to keep their staff employed, because that meant when sport resumed last year, they had people already in place, and resources to assist their clubs and the community.

Mr WILLIE - Some of them qualified for JobKeeper, too, which was good.

Ms LANGENBERG - Yes. We were aware of the fact that they qualified for JobKeeper, but in some cases, JobKeeper was only part of the funding to keep the positions employed. We either provided funding that topped that up, or actually funded the positions that weren't eligible, because they were much more part-time or temporary.

Mr WILLIE - Or casual.

Ms LANGENBERG - The other thing that we've done is repurpose a range of grants which you saw through the minister's previous advice about repurposing the community support levy last year, away from major and minor grants, into tranche 3 and tranche 5 grants as well. We're continuing to monitor that, as well as regularly monitoring the state sporting organisations on their registration numbers.

Despite the initial alarm raising about the impact that COVID-19 was going to have on membership in Tasmania, we were a lot luckier than other jurisdictions in that regard. A number of sports have in fact bounced back to have higher registration numbers than previously; sports like golf in particular, but other sports, too, have worked really hard to get people back into their sport, and offer things to get children involved as well. It's an ongoing exercise.

Ms HOWLETT - It is, and my office has certainly been in touch with the sporting codes about the possibility of a lockdown since we announced the lockdown plan on the website as well.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, the Prime Minister is talking about living with COVID-19 and opening up. How are our sports going to operate in that environment? Have you put your mind to that?

Ms HOWLETT - That's something that we've been workshoping at the moment and working out how we can return to play as quickly as possible.

Mr WILLIE - Will there be vaccination passports for sport, or have you done audits of facilities, in terms of COVID-19 compliance?

Ms HOWLETT - That's a matter for National Cabinet, as far as passports -

Ms LANGENBERG - Through you, minister. The regular updates going up to the sport and recreation sector, which started off weekly last year, when we were at the worst of the situation, are continuing to go out fortnightly or every three weeks. The minister has previously advised the sport and recreation sector has been very responsive to all of the government messaging around COVID-19 safe behaviours, use of the Check-in Tas app, and even the mask wearing, which has happened at some of the major events, through the events framework requirement as well.

They will continue to do so. We are mindful, I guess, of the impost we're placing on a volunteer-run sector to implement these measures. In effect, we're planning for the worst and hoping for the best, is probably the best way to describe the approach at the moment. Regular communication and support from the minister's office and from the department is all we can offer the community at the moment.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, is it your anticipation that sports will be able to continue in that environment that the Prime Minister keeps describing, living with COVID-19 and 80 per cent -

CHAIR - Does the Prime Minister let you know what he's thinking?

Mr WILLIE - Well, the minister responsible for sport here in this state - at 80 per cent vaccination rates, we're opening up, and the Premier has signed up to the national plan. Is it your anticipation that sport can continue in that environment, or will some sports not be able to continue in that environment, particularly contact sports?

Ms HOWLETT - We will continue to follow public health advice and work with sporting clubs, depending on their needs. Public Health advice has served us very well to date, and we will continue to follow that.

CHAIR - It's wearing down a lot of organisations I can assure you, so the sooner there's 80 per cent vaccination the better our communities might be. The member for Rosevears, Ms Palmer. Last question in this area, and then we're moving to 90.17 which you will take anyway.

Ms PALMER - I will. Thank you, Chair. Continuing with the support that is being offered to sporting clubs as they recover and work their way through COVID-19. Can you outline how the government is providing that financial assistance to sporting clubs, in particular to help in the purchase of equipment

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. The purchase of equipment has certainly been extremely important. The Tasmanian Liberal government acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 and the effects it's had on sporting clubs due to spectator restrictions, loss of revenue, postponements and cancellations of games and events. I'm pleased to announce

that the applications for the 2021-22 Sport and Recreation Equipment Grants Program are now open. The program offers financial assistance to assist with the purchase of additional or replacement equipment for the benefit of sporting clubs. The equipment must assist the organisation to deliver sport and recreation activities, replace or upgrade existing equipment or minor fixed infrastructure, ensure the safety of activities or improve the club's ability to conduct operations.

The program will provide grants between \$2000 and \$25 000 and applicants are required to contribute at least 20 per cent of the total project cost. The program opens today and closes on 10 November 2021. For further information, people can contact the Department of Communities Tasmania and I'll be issuing a media release shortly with more information.

Ms PALMER - Thank you.

CHAIR - If the member would like to move to 90.17, improving the playing field, that would be much appreciated.

90.17 Improving the Playing Field

Ms PALMER - Thank you, Chair. One of the local golf clubs in my electorate, the golf club of Riverside, has been a recipient of the Improving the Playing Field Grants Program. It has been wonderful for the club and for its members to see how they've benefited from that. How will the budget assist other sporting clubs by making funding available for new and improved sport and recreation infrastructure around Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. The Tasmanian Government recognises the importance of sport and recreation sectors to the Tasmanian community and is committed to supporting all Tasmanians to access sport and recreational opportunities. As part of the 2021-22 state Budget our government, through the Department of Communities Tasmania, will deliver a number of merit-based grant programs, including the \$10 million Improving the Playing Field Program.

Under the 2020-21 program, \$5 million was available to support infrastructure programs. During the recent state election, a commitment was made to double the funding available through the 2021-22 program to \$10 million. This important program aims to assist sporting clubs and associations to improve facilities across Tasmania, helping to maintain and build participation rates across all sporting codes. The increased funding pool enables applicants under the 2021-22 program to apply for grants between \$25 000 and \$500 000. The 2021-22 grant program opened on 14 July 2021. Applications for the small grants stream closed on 6 September 2021, with the large grant stream closing on 25 October 2021.

Outcomes of the small grant stream will be announced in November 2021 and outcomes of the large grant stream will be announced in February 2022. Under the 2021-22 program, applicants are generally required to provide up to 15 per cent of the total project cost, with applicants with higher contributions receiving a higher priority. Eligible projects under Improving the Playing Field included changerooms, toilets, shower facilities, accessibility, lighting, security, fencing, scoreboards, drainage and other civil construction works. This program not only assists sporting clubs and associations improve facilities across Tasmania, but it also helps to maintain and build participation rates across all sporting codes.

CHAIR - Minister, would you say that that's somewhat discriminatory, given that you get a priority if you've got more than 15 per cent to put towards the cost of a project? It means that you have to be a fairly wealthy club to be able to access priority funding, or did I misinterpret what you said?

Ms HOWLETT - No, you didn't misinterpret what I said. We've had this in place for other grants and we've not had negative feedback from it. Helen, would you like to speak to that?

CHAIR - You just said the more money you have to put in, the higher your priority would be.

Ms LANGENBERG - Value for money is one of the considerations although it's balanced with need for the facility as well. A layer of assessment is placed, depending on the socio-economic area, that the club or the project might serve, and on other factors such as the rate base of the local government area that it is in. Various factors are considered but the funding contribution can either be from the club itself or from funding that it's managed to leverage from other sources. That might be sponsors or, in the case of a major facility, often the local council will put a contribution towards it.

Previous funding programs have required a 50 per cent contribution, so the 15 per cent has actually been lowered, in recognition of the strains on the sector, and on those other areas of government because of COVID-19.

CHAIR - Is that funding split equitably across the larger amounts? Does it go across regions or is it just whoever is fortunate enough to be ready to go, if you like?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm at arm's length from the process so I'd have to ask Helen to elaborate.

CHAIR - You'll hardly get an opening, minister, the way you're going, at arm's length.

Ms LANGENBERG - The minister might like to tell you about how they're allocated though, given that they are listed on our website. There is some information on the spread across the state, which is of consideration.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, on the ones that have been done. The regional breakdown of applications received in 2020-21 is as follows: under the small grants stream, 74 applications were received; of these applications, 32.4 per cent were from the north, 31.1 per cent were from the north-west and 36.5 per cent were from the south. Of the 31 applications funded under the small grants stream, 38.7 per cent were from the north, 35.5 per cent were from the north-west and 25.8 per cent from the south.

Under the large grants stream, 141 applications were received. Of these applications, 24.8 per cent were from the north, 13.5 per cent were from the north-west, and 61.7 per cent were from the south. Of the 27 projects funded under the large grants stream, 29.6 per cent were from the north, 18.5 per cent were from the north-west and 51.9 per cent were from the south.

CHAIR - Heavily weighted to the south. Any other questions, members, in regard to those areas?

Mr VALENTINE - Some of the regional breakdowns show that the north and the north-west get more than the south in some areas. We've got to speak up for the south.

CHAIR - Not in the big ones.

Mr VALENTINE - No, not necessarily the big ones but, you know.

CHAIR - In the small ones.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes.

90.17 Grants and subsidies

CHAIR - Grants and subsidies, any -

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like me to talk through the successful applicants?

CHAIR - You might like to table those, given that they are on the website. That would be useful.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I think that would be good to table.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I'll hand those over to our very efficient secretariat support.

Minister, I'm not sure whether I'm in the right area but I'm going to try. In regard to the Stadium Authority Trust and I can find, thanks to the help of your good team behind you, in Budget Paper No. 1, on page 96 - Table 6.2 - infrastructure investment funding, with \$65 million for UTAS under the Stadium Authority Trust. Given that it's over a three-year financial period, what's the Trust going to do? They've already allocated the money. Are they going to sit around and look at what they've done or assess it? I'm just interested. I thank Tom for finding it for me.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. My understanding is that \$65 million will go to UTAS Stadium. Discussions about the potential transfer of UTAS Stadium to Stadiums Tasmania were initiated with the City of Launceston on 16 June 2021. It has provided us with a draft in-principle agreement on which the negotiation and transfer process occur. The team responsible for establishing Stadiums Tasmania briefed the stadium staff on these plans and toured the stadium on 20 July 2021. I'll have to seek some more information from Mr Ferguson for this.

CHAIR - So who's Stadiums Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - We're still actually developing Stadiums Tasmania at the moment.

CHAIR - But you've given them \$65 million for the UTAS Stadium, whoever they might be.

Ms HOWLETT - The Government is committed to establishing Stadiums Tasmania and this will centralise the ownership, management and development of major public stadium infrastructure in a new statutory entity. Kate, would you like to add -

CHAIR - But they haven't got any money, they've given it all to UTAS.

Ms KENT - It'll be managed by the Stadiums Trust. A Stadiums Tasmania bill will be introduced into parliament in October. It's currently being drafted, and is expected to come to the House of Assembly by mid-October. That will establish the entity, which will be Stadiums Tasmania. A chairperson, a board of directors and a CEO will then be appointed. That's expected to happen by early to mid-2022. As the minister has just said, discussions are underway to transfer those four entities, such as the UTAS Stadium, to the new trust once it's established. It's not established yet.

CHAIR - Who else belongs to this?

Ms HOWLETT - We're currently establishing the legislation.

CHAIR - So who else is going to belong to the stadium authority or Stadium Tasmania? UTAS Stadium, who else?

Ms HOWLETT - That's currently being worked out.

CHAIR - I thought UTAS Stadium was owned by the Launceston City Council.

Ms HOWLETT - It is.

CHAIR - They're going to relinquish it?

Mr VALENTINE - They're relinquishing it.

CHAIR - So in other words, there's too much upkeep on it.

Ms HOWLETT - It's anticipated -

CHAIR - The museum as well.

Mr WILLIE - Bit like the Derwent Entertainment Centre.

Ms HOWLETT - MyState Bank Arena, member for Elwick. It is anticipated that Stadiums Tasmania will assume responsibility for MyState Bank Arena in Hobart, and the Silverdome in Launceston - both of which are owned by the Crown; the Blundstone Arena in Bellerive and the UTAS Stadium in Launceston, if this can be negotiated with the Clarence City Council and the Launceston City Council. It is expected that stadiums considered for transfer to Stadiums Tasmania following its operationalisation will continue to be managed by their current owners and managers until their transfer has been negotiated and a mutually agreed timeframe has been confirmed.

CHAIR - Minister, whose initiative is this? Is this a Government initiative or is this something at the request -

Ms HOWLETT - It's an initiative by the state Government. And, as I said, it's legislation that we are currently drafting at the moment.

CHAIR - What if it doesn't pass? You've already got it set up, but it might not even pass the parliament.

Ms HOWLETT - We're currently writing the legislation, and we'll go into the House of Assembly in October this year.

Ms KENT - Through you, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms KENT - It hasn't been established yet, because the legislation has to happen first.

CHAIR - I come back to the fact that the Government has allocated \$65 million to the UTAS Stadium - \$20 million in this Budget and \$22.5 million in the two forward Estimates. So obviously there's -

Mr VALENTINE - It's not the UTAS Stadium; it's the Stadium Authority Trust.

CHAIR - No, but it's for UTAS Stadium, according to my information.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Maybe that needs clarification.

Ms HOWLETT - Well, that -

CHAIR - Is that the fact?

Ms HOWLETT - **CHAIR**, that money won't be spent unless the Stadiums Tasmania legislation actually goes through parliament.

CHAIR - Right. There isn't actually \$65 million for UTAS Stadium until after the legislation to establish the Stadium Authority Trust, or Stadium Tasmania, is put in place by the parliament?

Ms HOWLETT - The money is sitting there, but it won't be spent until the legislation passes both Houses of parliament.

Mr VALENTINE - Can I ask a supplementary on that?

CHAIR - By all means. I'm a tad confused. So, please, if you can clarify it.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm interested to know what's envisaged in terms of forward funding for the operation of this Stadium Authority Trust. Is it supposed to be self-supporting, through gate takings and the like?

CHAIR - Memberships?

Mr VALENTINE - What's the model, if we can know that?

Ms HOWLETT - We're currently, as I said, developing that legislation. And other jurisdictions certainly -

Mr VALENTINE - Well, that's the legislation.

Ms HOWLETT - -have this kind of legislation put in place.

Mr VALENTINE - That's the legislation, but there must be a vision.

CHAIR - Two hundred million.

Mr VALENTINE - There must be a vision for the way it's going to operate. You talked about a board and those sorts of things, but in terms of how it's going to survive into the future, that's the thing that is of interest to me.

Ms HOWLETT - The State Government has currently committed \$14.5 million for the funding of Stadiums Tasmania.

CHAIR - No, it says \$20 million in the Budget, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I have -

CHAIR - So is there an update on the \$20 million?

Ms HOWLETT - -the state funding. The information I have here is \$14.5 million for the establishment of Stadiums Tasmania.

CHAIR - So there's a \$14.5 million establishment funding for Stadium Tasmania. So, where's the other \$5.5 million?

Ms HOWLETT - The \$14.5 million is for the operations of Stadiums Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - So what's the budget paper? Is it just the money put aside for the infrastructure, which is the purchase of the infrastructure from whoever? That needs explaining.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll just take that on notice and get the information from Mr Ferguson for you.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - As an addition to this, with regard to UTAS Stadium. Is this dependent on Tasmania having its own football team?

Ms HOWLETT - No, it's not dependent on that. It's dependent on the legislation being passed through parliament.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

CHAIR - I want to get this absolutely clear in my mind: the Government has allocated \$14.5 million to establish Stadium Tasmania. Is that correct?

Ms KENT - I just wanted to clarify, as the minister did mention before - this should be under the minister for Infrastructure's portfolio. But, yes, in the Budget there should be - and I don't have the page there - the establishment just of the Stadiums Trust over the forward four years is \$14.5million. That's the figure that I have.

Mr VALENTINE - So that's under Infrastructure?

Ms KENT - Yes. This will be under the minister for Infrastructure.

Ms HOWLETT - In 2021-22, there's \$1.5 million allocated; in 2022-23, there's \$3 million; in 2023-24, there's \$5 million; in 2024-25, there's \$5 million. That's a total of \$14.5 million.

CHAIR - Again, I ask why, page 96 of Budget Paper No.1 - regardless of who is the minister - there's \$20 million. Is that wrong? - This is about Stadium Tasmania; and the last time I looked, Stadium Tasmania predominantly hosted sporting events.

Ms HOWLETT - Madam Chair, I'll need to take that on notice and get information from Mr Ferguson.

CHAIR - All right. Thank you. Minister, there will be an opportunity for the Legislative Council to drill down into this in November.

Mr VALENTINE - It would be good to have an understanding of the model before that.

CHAIR - Well, we'll have to get it by briefings and -

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. We're still developing the legislation, as we said.

CHAIR - So the vision hasn't quite evolved as yet.

Mr VALENTINE - Clearly -

Mr WILLIE - It's under Government Businesses in Budget Paper 1, so it's probably going to be a government business enterprise.

CHAIR - Yes. Well, hooray, another one.

Ms ARMITAGE - We know we have to improve UTAS up to 27 500 seating capacity for our own AFL team.

Mr WILLIE - Or a corporation; it could be a state corporation.

CHAIR - But it's also going to include the MyState Bank Arena, the Silverdome and the Blundstone Arena - if you can get it from Clarence. Good luck with that. Very interesting.

Capital Investment

CHAIR - Page 68, members, is capital investment. Any other questions around the former Derwent Entertainment Centre? The Budget Paper is still calling it the Derwent Entertainment Centre. They didn't get the memo, so they'll be scolded as well.

Ms HOWLETT - We'll need to fine them.

Mr VALENTINE - I asked a question on that, so I don't have any more questions.

CHAIR - Yes. All right. Member for Launceston?

Ms ARMITAGE - No.

CHAIR - I congratulate the Government on the funding to upgrade the Silverdome. Two northern netball teams played off in the grand final on Saturday night for the second year in a row. Sorry, south. Congratulations to the Cavaliers. I think I've given members enough time, so it seems we've completed this section. Thank you very much, minister. We certainly appreciate the time and the effort of everyone to support you through these output groups. We look forward to scrutinising you as the Minister for Racing. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Madam Chair. I also thank my department and my team.

CHAIR - We shall suspend the broadcast and come back in a couple of minutes. Thank you.

The Committee suspended at 6.19 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 6.24 p.m.

DIVISION 10

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

Output group 5

Racing regulation and policy

5.1 Racing regulation and policy

CHAIR - This is the last 500 metres of this particular race today.

Ms HOWLETT - What barrier are we in?

CHAIR - We're on the inside running at this point in time.

Ms HOWLETT - Good.

CHAIR - So we're doing okay. You're on the outside.

Ms HOWLETT - I am.

CHAIR - Minister, welcome back, and if you would like to introduce your team at the table, and I know we have the return of the secretary of the department, then we will commence the scrutiny of the Office of Racing Regulation and Policy, and also there's some funding as well in this one. So, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIR - Have you an overview?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes. To my left I have Tim Baker, secretary of the department; and Deidre Wilson, deputy secretary.

CHAIR - Always nice to see you, Deidre.

Ms HOWLETT - Justin Helmich, Director of the Office of Racing Integrity.

CHAIR - You're a welcome back. With your pencil case, I might add.

Mr HELMICH - It's my son's pencil case. He's watching.

CHAIR - Is he?

Ms HOWLETT - Madam Chair, racing is a critical industry for Tasmania.

CHAIR - Hear, hear.

Ms HOWLETT - Generating more than \$103 million a year in economic activity in the state, particularly benefitting rural and regional areas. More than 5500 Tasmanians are either employed in the industry or are direct participants and the state Government support for the industry gives it the confidence to continue to grow.

There is no doubt that COVID-19 presented, and will continue to present, great challenges for all three racing codes in Tasmania. The racing industry in Tasmania is resilient and passionate and they should be recognised for how they have responded after the racing lockdown.

From this year's budget, a total of \$48 million will be invested into the state's racing industry, including funding for the Office of Racing Integrity which is administered through DPIPWE, totalling \$5.75 million. \$350 000 attributed towards the thoroughbred and harness breeding programs to increase foal numbers in Tasmania. The government has committed to extend the funding of these programs until 2024-25. \$500 000 to deliver training for apprentice training and mandatory training packages linked to licences in Tasmania through TasTAFE. This is a four-year commitment of \$2 million.

Over the forward Estimates, we are increasing annual stakes across all three codes of 16 per cent over four years, including 6 per cent this financial year. This is on top of the 19 per

cent increases we have already delivered in stakes over the three years to February this year. The Office of Racing Integrity, or ORI as it's known, is responsible for maintaining the probity and integrity of the thoroughbred harness and greyhound racing in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Government will commence a review of the Racing Regulation Act 2004 to improve integrity in the racing industry. The Racing Regulation Act 2004 has not been substantially reviewed since its inception. Probity and integrity are critically important in the racing industry and underpins confidence in racing across all three codes in the state; thoroughbred, harness, and greyhounds. Given the importance of integrity and probity in racing, it is timely to review the act and this review is about strengthening and enhancing integrity functions and animal welfare.

The Government is investing more money than ever before into greyhound and horse welfare to ensure they are treated with dignity and care before, during, and after their racing days. Animal welfare is a high priority for the government and the Office of Racing Integrity. ORI ensures property inspections throughout the state are undertaken to ensure racing animals are properly cared for and licenced participants are complying with animal welfare legislation and the racing rules.

ORI contributes to a healthy, growing, and competitive racing and breeding industry by ensuring that it is safe, fair, and creditable. The Tasmanian Liberal Government will do everything it can to support the racing industry and further investment so those in the industry can thrive and succeed right here in Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister, and certainly a couple of points that you made through your overview contribution there was around great challenges. I'll get straight to the point: is the reason you have announced a review of ORI something to do with the many pieces of media that the office has received over the past few days. I'd like to add that if the integrity of the racing industry is compromised, then I expect that ORI, the Office of Racing Integrity, would be somewhat responsible for that. Are you concerned and do you want to give this committee a couple of answers around that, the terms of reference and about establishing the review to start with? Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly, Chair. Look, I have known that there has been issues in ORI for a while now, hence I've announced that the Tasmanian Government will commence a review of the Racing Regulations Act 2004 which has not been substantially reviewed, as I said, since its inception. Probity and integrity are critically important in the racing industry and it underpins the confidence in racing across all three codes, therefore it's timely to review the act with a view to strengthen and enhancing these integrity functions as well as animal welfare.

The review into the Racing Regulations Act 2004 will include the functions of both the Office of Racing Integrity and Tasracing. The Government will be retaining a separation of integrity functions from Tasracing while also strengthening and enhancing integrity functions that govern racing in Tasmania. Many, if not all, racing jurisdictions have some form of separation of their integrity function and this review will ensure all models are considered. The review will be undertaken by an independent expert to be announced in due course along with the terms of reference and a discussion paper to encourage broad engagement, including extensive consultation with the industry and the community.

This review will be an important step to ensure that the governance and integrity model in Tasmania is effective in delivering probity and integrity with appropriate education compliance and enforcement functions that are easily understood by participants and the community. Secretary, would you like to add anything to that?

Mr BAKER - I'm happy to and I guess going to your point, Chair, through you, minister, I'd like to just talk a little bit about the culture inside ORI and so -

CHAIR - Well, according to my media release it says it's dysfunctional and the morale has hit rock bottom.

Mr BAKER - Right. Well, I guess what I'd say in response to that is that the department has completed a range of measures for - and been working with ORI for some time. It is clear that there are cultural issues inside ORI, but what we've done already is we've provided dedicated support from our people in culture area to work with the managers and the staff in the team.

We've increased overall resource in the team through the creation of a regulatory vet, a cadet program and a new operations manager. We've worked closely with the CPSU. I know I and my deputy have, and we've talked to the CPSU. Tom Lynch and Thirza White. In fact, I spoke to Thirza White last week about this. One of the other things we did is move them physically from the office in Launceston, where they were isolated, into the main office up in Launceston so they were surrounded by the rest of the people we staff.

We have provided training from a range of experts, including the former New South Wales chief steward to the stewards, and also training in a number of other areas. I'd also acknowledge that there's more work to be done, and there are issues. So, what we've done in the last few weeks is I've asked the newly-appointed chief people officer to have a look at further strategies for how we could address any of the issues in ORI. We're looking at producing an improved training plan, particularly for the stewards, and also a fatigue management plan.

We'll continue to work with the unions and, yes, we have appointed a new director of racing integrity down the end of the table there, and he's met with the minister; he's met with the unions; and he'll be meeting with participants next week. The other point - and the minister touched on this - is that I still believe key to addressing these cultural problems is looking at the structure of ORI. It's clear to DPIPWE that there are structural problems with the way ORI has been set up. So, some examples of that: the role as director of racing integrity and general manager and how that works is difficult to be both a statutory officer, but also with staff to manage. So that's something we need to look at.

The way I would describe it is the sharing of compliance functions between ORI, Tasracing and the clubs. In addition to that, ORI being both a compliance team, an assurance team and an enforcement team, all of which needs to be looked at. I'm very confident that as we go through this review and we look at the elements the minister's talked about, it'll give us an opportunity to have a look at those underlying structural problems and build a better model which will drive a better culture.

CHAIR - Who is going to undertake the review and who's going to put the terms of reference together and who will lead the review? What will the reporting framework and timelines be?

Ms HOWLETT - I will announce a detailed paper in due course on who will lead the review and the terms of reference.

CHAIR - With all due respect, I don't think the racing industry has a lot of time when this is around the integrity of the racing industry, so -

Ms HOWLETT - No, it's a very important point that you've made, and we certainly need to consult with the industry on the terms of reference and the discussion paper.

CHAIR - Of the more than 20 staff that have left since 2018, is this newer staff to ORI or is it the more established workforce who are deciding that they're not on-board anymore? Just interested.

Mr BAKER - Through you, minister. I would like to address this issue because I don't think it's been reported appropriately. So, over the past four years, on average, just over four permanent or fixed-term employees have left ORI per year on average. So that's in a team of 27 permanent or fixed-term staff. So, reports about mass walkouts are just not correct, and in fact, if you look at the turnover, only one of the permanent or fixed-term staff left last year.

However, it is true to say that the Australian racing industry is experiencing both skill shortages and turnover issues across the industry, and there's plenty of literature about that. ORI itself has lost a lot - well, not a lot, but they've lost some good staff to mainland codes where it's bigger; it's sort of the big end of town and you get to go and work on the group 1 races in Melbourne and Sydney. While that's a credit to ORI, it's also - it has operational impacts. There's no doubting that. With that in mind we've been working on doing a number of things. We've increased the number of stewards. We've increased the cadet program for stewards to try to be career path, and we have used interstate stewards and casual stewards to help fill the gap. There's still more work to be done here, so we're looking at how we can fast-track recruitment while remaining respectful of the State Service Act, and we're also putting in place an extra steward.

The other point I would make is the Premier this afternoon announced - released the final report in the state service review, and if you have a look at that, what you can see is this issue is not unique to ORI. There's a series of recommendations in that report around workplace and about - I'll just find it - around capability and how we manage capability better in the State Service and also around workforce. So, in my mind you've got the combination of both factors: you've got an industry that - let's be honest, and the minister's been upfront about this - it isn't always an easy industry to work in. Nobody likes to get up - the stewards don't like to get up at 4 am to watch the track work, and it can be difficult.

So, from our point of view we're trying to give ORI as much support as we possibly can. We're looking at some of the initiatives that have been put forward in other jurisdictions, and that's where the cadet program came from because it was successful in other jurisdictions, but we've also got to acknowledge that there are broader trends here that we need to manage.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - This doesn't give me any joy as a supporter of the racing industry to have to drill down into this.

Mr BAKER - No.

CHAIR - Not one iota. Not any joy at all. But my question is back to are the staff that have left - regardless of the numbers, are they newer staff or are they more long term? The point I'm trying to get at: is it the fact that some people are not welcome in ORI and are pushed out?

Mr BAKER - Through you, minister. I'll have to take - and Deidre points out - I'll have to take on notice the length of tenure of the people who have left. I'm happy to do that, but that's certainly not been my experience of working with ORI since I came back to the department and since I was made secretary. You know, we are attempting - and I think we are fostering a working environment in our department where everyone is welcome. So if those concerns are being raised with you or with anyone else, then I want to hear about it as secretary because that's not the work environment that we're building and it's not reflected in what I'm seeing. I don't know if you wanted to talk to that, Deidre?

Ms WILSON - Thank you.

CHAIR - I know Deidre has a lot of experience, so thank you.

Ms WILSON - I think that what I would say is that the reason why people leave is often complex in groups. So I'll talk in principle because I prefer not to talk about employment matters per se. We'll be able to give you some information on notice about the tenure of people that have left, but I think as the secretary has pointed out, we've acknowledged that there are concerns. We're working with the CPSU and we will continue to do so. Our chief people officer will work with the new GM and director of racing to work with ORI staff, because when we have people that are reporting things, we don't put our head in the sand and say, well that's not happening.

What we do is we say, we need to talk with those staff, we need to understand what the issues are, and we need to put a plan in place to support that team for the future, and that's our commitment as the secretary - chief secretary and general manager.

CHAIR - When this has a line item of nearly \$5.5 million - 5.5, near enough - then it is our job to provide the scrutiny.

Ms WILSON - Absolutely.

CHAIR - Particularly when it is around the integrity of the racing industry.

Mr VALENTINE - Can I ask a question?

CHAIR - Yes, of course. I'm not going to take them all.

Mr VALENTINE - No, that's okay. I'm just interested to know, you were talking about the four permanent or fixed-term staff have left each year for four years. What is the full FTE again on this?

Mr BAKER - I'll just get my numbers right. There are 26 permanent or fixed-term employees and then they are supplemented by casual staff.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay.

Mr BAKER - Because it's one - yes.

CHAIR - Secondments from elsewhere.

Mr BAKER - No, it's more about - it's obviously - racing, like a lot of areas in DPIPWE, and I know there's been some comment about this in the media, but it is true, it is a demand driven organisation. At certain times of the year, racing, not unlike Parks in the summer months, that we need more staff and they - and so we supplement the fixed-term and permanent staff with additional casuals, and it just depends, Mr Valentine, on the work requirements, and so it fluctuates. But there are 26, there are 26 permanent and fixed-term staff and at the moment I'm being told there are 18 casuals.

CHAIR - Yes, okay.

Mr VALENTINE - Through you minister, if I might. Just with respect to comparing that level of attrition, if I can put it that way, with the rest of the department, how does it fit?

Mr BAKER - I'm advised that it's slightly higher, but again I'd be happy to take it on notice and get you the actual figures.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm just interested to know whether it's -

Mr BAKER - It's slightly higher.

Mr VALENTINE - whether it's wildly different.

Mr BAKER - No, it's not wildly higher.

Mr VALENTINE - Or whether it's just -

Mr BAKER - But again, I don't, in this committee or in any other committee or any other public forum, want to walk away from the fact that this is a difficult work environment for our staff. Long hours, often confrontational, and very specialist in nature. I think it's also on the public record, as the minister knows, that stewards are paid significantly more in other jurisdictions. So the lure to be pulled to the mainland to go and work at Flemington or Randwick is quite high.

CHAIR - That's a side issue from what we're talking about here. I mean, long hours and the lure of another jurisdiction, it might well be because it's a good place to work, and that's what I'm trying to get at here.

Mr BAKER - Chair, through you minister, again I acknowledge that there have and continue to be cultural issues in the team and that we're now putting in place - we have already

put in place and we're continuing to put in place a series of changes to help address those problems.

CHAIR - My final question is - because we can't spend all day on this, or what's left of it - is will the review just focus on management issues or will it look at the long-term culture, performance, and behaviour of all employees?

Ms HOWLETT - We will outline that in the terms of reference that will be announced in due course.

CHAIR - Minister, you must have your mind on this right now, given that you're a strong supporter of the racing industry.

Ms HOWLETT - Like you, I'm a very passionate supporter of the racing industry. Always have been and always will be, like you. That's why it's so important to get these terms of reference correct and that's why we'll be talking and having discussions with the three codes and with key stakeholders and the community to develop those terms of reference.

Mr BAKER - Agreed, and again, I don't want to leave this committee with an impression that it's one or the other. It's both. It's a review in terms - the review that the minister has announced and it's also ongoing work with the team on the ground to help address these issues.

CHAIR - Because a review might take 12 months.

Mr BAKER - Yes.

CHAIR - No industry can afford 12 months of having a cloud over it, again particularly because it affects the integrity of racing. This needs to be short, sharp.

Ms HOWLETT - It needs to be thorough too though, Chair. It needs to be a very thorough review. We need to make sure we get this right. As I stated before, the act hasn't been reviewed since its inception in 2004. I'm pleased to have Mr Helmich on board now as the director of racing who has an enormous amount of experience in HR issues and will certainly put things in place at ORI. Would you like to add any more to that?

Mr BAKER - Yes, it's essential.

CHAIR - In the meantime.

Ms HOWLETT - In the meantime, that's right, correct.

Mr BAKER - I come back to there are things that we've already done and things we can do, and we are doing right now.

Ms HOWLETT - Immediately. Immediately.

Mr BAKER - Including improving the training plans for the stewards, looking at fatigue management, working with the unions to find out what other issues there are, and leadership starts - culture and cultural change starts with leadership and we've got a new leader in place -

Ms HOWLETT - Starts now.

Mr BAKER - Who is very well placed to help address these issues.

CHAIR - I hope he's not nervous, because they haven't lasted very long, I might add, so there we are.

Mr VALENTINE - If I might just interrupt with another question -

CHAIR - Yes, another question.

Mr VALENTINE - on a different topic really. Just in relation to -

CHAIR - Racing regulations?

Mr VALENTINE - Well, I guess it is. It's actually the issue of greyhound racing, and obviously its public image. There are a lot of people out there that would like to see it stopped, given the fact that dogs get hurt on a regular basis. I know when we did the inquiry some time ago there was talk about straight tracks as opposed to curved tracks and those sorts of things, or indeed not having it. But what are you doing about reviewing that?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. The Tasmanian Government is committed to improving animal welfare outcomes in the racing industry across all three codes. The government and Tasracing are investing more money than ever before into greyhound and horse welfare to ensure that they are treated with dignity and care before, during, and after they race. Tasracing and the industry are working together to examine ways to modernise the sport of greyhound racing and improve the animal welfare outcomes.

As part of this broad piece of work, improving track safety is an ongoing agenda item for Tasracing. Tasracing has recently implemented a track benchmark - benchmarking testing procedures to provide a better more consistent, thus safer, racing service for greyhound racing. Tasracing has had all racetracks reviewed by national consultants to ensure best practice maintenance and preparation of the racing surface, and benchmarked against 49 tracks around Australia. The review placed three Tasmanian tracks in the top seven safest tracks in Australia.

Whilst the introduction of straight tracks was believed to be the best option to reduce stress on greyhounds and reduce injuries, it's been shown that appropriately designed single turn tracks can have the same result. It is Tasracing's responsibility to examine all options to improve animal welfare and that's what they have been doing.

Mr VALENTINE - What steps are being taken? Okay, that's the racetrack side of it. It would be interesting to know what other jurisdictions are actually - that have straight tracks, how they compare with those with circular tracks, if we put that way, or curved tracks. What are you actually doing to improve the welfare of the dogs, in particular, in greyhound racing at the moment if you're not looking at straight tracks? What else are you doing?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm pleased to say, as far as statistics are concerned, track deaths are certainly decreasing. In 2019-2020 financial year, 13 greyhounds were euthanised after receiving a catastrophic injury at the track, and this must be viewed in the context of approximately 10 000 greyhounds racing during this same period. In the 2020-21 financial

year, seven greyhounds were euthanised after receiving track injuries, with approximately 12 000 racing starts during that same period. In 2021-22, four greyhounds have been euthanised on track so far. Those numbers are considerably lower.

Mr VALENTINE - The question was, what's actually happening in the greyhound racing industry to improve welfare of the dogs. I understand that the numbers may well be coming down but one greyhound dying is one too many. Some might have heart attacks, who knows, but certainly we don't want to see animals injured in an effort to help people to have a good time. What steps are actually being done to improve the welfare of dogs? It's just specifically that.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, sure. Tasracing continues to focus on improvements in welfare with the implementation of the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme. The scheme is targeted at reducing the instances of euthanasia at race meetings due to injury by providing financial support for the assessment, repair and rehabilitation of those injuries. The scheme has helped reduce the number of greyhounds euthanised at race meetings. It was established in April 2019 and in October 2020 funding to the Ontrack Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme Payment to cover vet expenses increased from 1500 to 3000 per greyhound per injury. The scheme was extended to cover official trials as well.

Utilisation of the Greyhound Recovery Rebate Scheme has certainly increased over time but the CEO of Tasracing will appear before you in GBEs and I'm sure he'll be able to elaborate on that further.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm sure he can, it's just this is about racing regulations so it really comes to making sure that the animals are as safe as they possibly can be if you're going to continue the racing.

CHAIR - Thank you. The member for Launceston.

Ms ARMITAGE - Can I just have a follow up firstly on the figures you gave for the greyhounds. Just making sure I took them down correctly. 2019-20 it was 13 greyhounds. Is that right? 2020-21, seven?

Ms HOWLETT - Eighteen greyhounds were euthanised in 2019-20, 13 greyhounds were euthanised in 2020-21, seven were euthanised on track and in 2021-22, and four have been euthanised this financial year.

Ms ARMITAGE - Realistically, we're going very badly this financial year, because that would be June, wouldn't it? June to - 2021-22, so we're talking about from June 21?

Ms HOWLETT - We're talking about this financial year.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. We've already euthanised four.

Ms HOWLETT - Correct.

Ms ARMITAGE - In a quarter. Any idea why it looks like going back to 2018-19 figures if it continues the way it is?

Ms HOWLETT - I certainly hope it doesn't go back to 2018-19 figures.

Ms ARMITAGE - Four in three months.

Mr VALENTINE - The point is it's not going down, it's going back up.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, it is.

Ms HOWLETT - I guess considering the amount - I mean we're running two to three race meets a week.

Mr BAKER - I guess it is a matter of waiting and see.

CHAIR - Into your microphone, thank you.

Mr BAKER - Sorry. Through you, minister. I was just going to say I guess ultimately it is a matter of waiting and seeing. I mean all the controls that have been put in place, this is a Tasracing issue, by the way, not our own issue. All those controls are in place, so I guess we are running more - Tasracing is running -

Mr VALENTINE - It's still our policy.

CHAIR - It is.

Mr VALENTINE - It is a policy line on and a policy of having greyhound racing going around tracks as opposed to straight ones is a policy issue, isn't it?

Mr BAKER - Yes.

Ms HOWLETT - We are investing more money than ever before into animal welfare and we will continue to do so.

CHAIR - Can I just go back to the steward's issue, because I recall last year we had a shortage and I know you said we've got cadets now and an improvement in the number of stewards. What's the optimal number of stewards that you would want to have and do we have that, or are we still short?

Mr BAKER - Through you, minister, and I'll ask the deputy to answer that if that's okay.

Ms WILSON - I'll just get my numbers.

Ms ARMITAGE - I appreciate that with COVID-19 we've had probably some races that didn't go ahead, that might have changed the figures.

Ms WILSON - On our numbers, we've got the two cadet stewards with a third to be appointed and nine other stewards. One of the things I've asked the new director of racing and GM ORI is to actually talk to the current stewards and provide advice on whether that current mix of stewards and steward investigators is the best mix. This is part of that discussion around culture. Making sure that we're actually talking to the team and understanding the current workload, the current requirements, looking at the fatigue management policy so that we've got

the best structure within ORI. The secretary has also indicated that if a new director considers that we need an additional resource in the stewarding area, that we would be supportive of that and we'd certainly be looking at how that would best fit within the team. That's one of the first tasks I've asked our new director of racing to undertake.

CHAIR - But you've got to cut in the budget moving forward.

Ms WILSON - I've got a commitment from the secretary that we will be able to have resourcing for that.

CHAIR - You're going to take a pay cut.

Ms WILSON - I didn't suggest that.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the term that stewards stay, they're on a contract or do you have many stewards leave? Is it something that they have longevity, or have we had a lot of stewards leave over the last couple of years, because of workload?

Ms WILSON - I'd have to look at the figures but as the secretary said, there's turnover for various reasons within ORI and we were going to look at and take on notice the longevity of people, so I don't have that information about when they've left. What I would say is that stewards are appointed under contracts under the Racing Regulation Act and they perform a really important function in racing. We appreciate all they do in supporting probity in racing industry.

Ms ARMITAGE - Would that be a five-year contract, three-year contract?

Ms WILSON - I think that the standard has been five but I will need to check that fact for you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Would you be able to check and take on notice just how many of those stewards actually complete their five-year contract and how many leave early?

Ms WILSON - Yes, we can have a look at that. I'm not sure how long it might take us.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, no, that's fine. I don't necessarily need it before we do the budget but it'd be interesting to know.

Ms WILSON - I might note we have casual stewards, so in this case we would focus on our permanent steward workforce and then have a look at what the cadets casual stewards look like as well.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the casual stewards are the cadets?

Ms WILSON - No, they're different.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the casual stewards, they don't have a contract. Are they mainland stewards that are coming in, are they the casual stewards?

Ms WILSON - No, casual stewards are actually on a casual contract, so casual hours.

Mr BAKER - Yes, and that was the point, through you, minister, I was going to make, which is one of the big challenges for ORI and the racing industry more broadly is the peaks and troughs of races. So as practical as it sounds, the number of stewards you need is determined by the number of races that are being held in Tasmania. That does fluctuate and it does change, and we do need to maintain some flexibility in having ability to use, as I said, interstate or casual stewards to help fill that gap. But as the deputy secretary said, in addition to that we also need to be doing better workforce planning to work out should we have more permanent or not, and I suspect as the deputy said, it'll be more permanent stewards moving forward.

Ms ARMITAGE - My last question on the stewards, Chair -

CHAIR - Supplementary on that particular point, Ms Palmer or -

Ms PALMER - Yes, it was but following on, can the minister give us some information on what the Government is doing to entice people, and especially younger people, into a career in stewarding.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a really good question and I thank the member for her question. At the 2018 State Election the Government provided a strong policy to grow a vital Tasmanian racing industry. Among our policies were several new commitments including \$550 000 over four years to create new steward cadetships positions within the Office of Racing Integrity. In keeping with its workforce renewal policy, ORI will appoint a third cadet steward this year, which hopefully will result in development of a career racing steward to benefit the whole racing industry. This will further strengthen the integrity functions and encourage the cadets to consider stewarding as a long-term career.

A cadet steward is an entry-level position, and affords a successful candidate an opportunity with guidance and training to assist in the administration and regulation of the racing industry.

Racing bodies around the country recognise the importance of training cadet stewards within their jurisdiction. Experienced stewards are highly sought after around the country, and stewards are in short demand throughout Australia. Stewards regularly move between states to gain experience, career progression, and greater reward. There are currently two cadets working at ORI, and as with all budget measures, consideration of the continuation of successful initiatives will be undertaken closer to their expiry.

CHAIR - Thank you. The member for Launceston, and then I'm going down the other end of the table.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. It was just finalising my questions on stewards. Are you able to tell me the number of fines, suspensions and disqualifications issued by stewards, and how many of those decisions were appealed, and how many - and I'm happy to take it on notice - and how many were upheld or overturned.

CHAIR - It's on page 297.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, but it would be good to have it on the record here.

CHAIR - There has been a significant increase.

Ms ARMITAGE - That's why I thought it was good to have it on the record.

Ms HOWLETT - We've got that information on page 297.

Ms ARMITAGE - Page 297 in the book. I would just like it on the record, if I could, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. For the period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, 544 fines, suspensions and disqualifications have been issued by stewards, the target being 450. Factors considering penalty vary depending on the rule breach. Considerations are, but not limited to, an early plea; degree of culpability; offence record; deterrence factors; personal circumstances; national and local penalty proceedings. For the period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, 20 decisions by ORI stewards were appealed to the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board. Of the 20 decisions appealed, three were quashed, which is 15 per cent. During this same period, nine decisions had their penalties varied, and four appeals were dismissed in stewards' favour.

CHAIR - That's 45 per cent minister, the penalties were varied.

Ms HOWLETT - We'll get back to that. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, two licencing panel decisions were appealed to the TRAB board. The targets for suspensions, disqualifications, fines and appeals are difficult to forecast, and largely beyond the control of the Office of Racing Integrity. ORI continues to focus on continued improvement. The Director of Racing actively reviews all steward inquiries and appeals to determine if compliance practices need to be improved. Secretary, do you have anything to add on that?

Ms ARMITAGE - Perhaps an idea of why there's been such a large increase, from the target of 450 to the actual, of 544. I would have thought there'd be less races, so there might be less, rather than more.

Mr BAKER - Through you, minister, it's not necessarily a bad thing at all. But we can take that on notice if that's all right.

Ms ARMITAGE - It would just be interesting to know, as well, what they were actually for, in some ways, because there are more - whether they are more a minor issue or a more major issue.

Mr BAKER - Yes, we can get that.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. That would be great.

CHAIR - Are they categorised? Is that something that we can - minor and major?

Mr BAKER - They're not categorised into minor and major, but -

Ms ARMITAGE - No, but you can actually list what they are. It would be interesting to see why there's such an increase. Thank you.

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CHAIR - All right, thank you. Shadow minister.

Mr WILLIE - No, I'm not a shadow minister -

CHAIR - You're not a shadow minister anymore?

Mr WILLIE - I am, but not for this.

CHAIR - All right.

Mr WILLIE - I want to ask some questions about the COVID-19 grants. Do I do that here or in the grants -

CHAIR - No, in the next one. This is racing regulation.

Mr WILLIE - All right, well, I might wait.

Mr VALENTINE - There was obviously some issues around the use of whips in - was it pacing or was it trots?

CHAIR - Harness -

Mr VALENTINE - Harness racing. Can you give me an update on where that's at? Obviously, again to do with animal welfare. I know that you did make some statements about certain things were being considered and investigated before a policy was going to be set on this. Where that's at?

Ms HOWLETT - Certainly. The rules of harness racing, which include provisions to protect the welfare of animals, are established by the Harness Racing Australia Board. On 19 December 2020, at Mowbray, harness driver Gavin Kelly was issued a verbal direction by stewards to carry a whip when driving. On 29 December 2020, at Devonport, the stewards held an inquiry with Mr Kelly, because he failed to carry a whip during a race on that day. Mr Kelly was charged under the Australian Harness Racing Rules for failing to comply with a direction of a steward to carry a whip when driving in all races.

The stewards stated that he did not have to use a whip, but he must carry it for safety purposes. Mr Kelly was fined \$1000, of which 750 was suspended for 12 months, on condition that he does not reoffend. On 30 December 2020, Mr Kelly lodged a notice and grounds of appeal to the Office of Racing Integrity. The appeal hearing was scheduled for 4 February 2021, but did not proceed on this date. An agreement was made by Mr Kelly with ORI prior to the appeal hearing. Mr Kelly made application to withdraw his appeal, which was approved by the Tasmanian Racing Appeal Board.

I have noted the comments of the RSPCA Tasmania CEO Jan Davis that the decision to fine Mr Kelly for refusing to carry a whip was disappointing, and contrary to the national body's agenda. Harness Racing Australia has been working with the national body of the RSPCA for 11 years to modify and improve the whip rule. As a result of the incident, ORI has updated the ORI harness racing policy and procedure document, and added whip rule policy. 28.1, 'Under race conditions, a driver must always have a whip readily accessible, in the event it is required to be used for safety purposes.'

The whip may be carried on the sulky or in the dusk sheet, or by the driver. 28.2, 'A driver shall not strike with a whip any gear or equipment connected to their horse, including a wheel disk, with an action that allows the whip to protrude outside the confines of the sulky.' As minister, it's appropriate for me - sorry. So, yes, it's all about the harness racing. Secretary, would you like to elaborate?

Mr BAKER - No, I think you've covered it.

Mr VALENTINE - So it still has to be carried, for the purposes of safety?

Ms HOWLETT - For safety reasons, yes.

Mr VALENTINE - But he doesn't have to use it.

Ms HOWLETT - No, but it has to be carried.

CHAIR - He or she.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, correct, he or she.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, he or she. In that case, I commend him for his action, because he simply didn't want to hurt the horse. But that's another thing. That's obviously not for us -

CHAIR - It's around safety and harness -

Mr VALENTINE - It's about safety. Thank you for that clarification.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - So does that mean that there's going to be no further work done on that policy, or what's the future there?

Ms HOWLETT - The Australian Harness Rules are always looking at various policies, so we'll be guided by them.

Mr VALENTINE - You don't know whether they're actively looking at the carrying of whips -

Ms HOWLETT - They're always looking at ways to improve, yes. It's certainly being targeted at the moment.

CHAIR - Thank you, Tim. We can pick up those important comments.

Mr BAKER - Through you, minister, I think it is fair to say that whips continue to be a major issue for the code and the standards.

Mr VALENTINE - And for gallops.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, absolutely. That's also constantly being looked at as well.

Mr VALENTINE - Is there any move in that regard?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe there is talk with the national body on a move in that regard, but the use of whips in harness, as we said, is governed by the national rules established by the HRA and adopted by Tasracing. They've already made many various amendments to this rule over recent years, with equine welfare at the heart of the amendments, and those changes were made to balance industry and community expectations, and the capacity to control a horse during a race for safety reasons. Tasracing and the Office of Racing Integrity have been educating participants on whip reform in both codes.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - One quick question, and I'm happy to take it on notice, but I've asked it for the last couple of years, together with Mr Dean. Have we had any issues to do with Oripavine this year, with the amount of poppies that are growing and going into the feed. The second question is to do with Regumate, that people have had issues with before. I know Mr King answered me last year with regard to an alternative, but apparently some owners do prefer the Regumate. Has that been an issue with suspensions? As I said, I am happy if you haven't got the answers now to provide them later.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I'll take that on notice if you don't mind.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, that's fine. As I said, Oripavine had been an issue, getting into the feed with the amount of poppies growing; and also Regumate with some of the owners preferring that to the alternative injectable progesterone.

CHAIR - If the minister can answer the member for Rosevears question in four minutes, then I'll allow it, so thank you.

Ms PALMER - Minister, continued upskilling of participants is vital for the industry to continue to adapt, especially with animal welfare standards and rule changes. Can you outline for us what you're doing in the Budget to help this?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is delivering on its commitment to deliver improved training opportunities for the racing industry. Included in the year's funding deed is \$500 000 to deliver training for apprentice training and mandatory training packages linked to licenses in Tasmania, through TasTAFE. This is a four-year \$2 million commitment. There is critical risk for the thoroughbred code and the industry has identified it as a concern. As it stands there are no local training packages leading to accreditation for jockeys. The industry has attempted to address the shortage in jockeys with measures such as partnership with the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

Training packages in Tasmania are currently delivered by an interstate registered training authority, which delivers modules in Tasmania on a fly-in fly-out basis, according to demand. There is also no accredited Tasmanian harness driver training offered, leaving the harness code reliant upon a Victorian training provider, and these courses are not accredited. The Office of Racing Integrity monitors welfare to ensure all animals are treated with dignity and care before, after and during their race. To ensure this continued compliance, the government has outlined

that we're expanding education through TasTAFE to support animal welfare training. Under the rules of racing, participants have obligations when attending to racing animals, that they do so without banned substances in their system.

The Office of Racing Integrity stewards have the powers, under the rules, to test participants. Education is often seen as a deterrent. This identified need for training of apprentice jockeys, harness drivers, and other participants is a demonstration of the need for a more flexible, more responsive TAFE, that will assist the Office of Racing Integrity in ensuring the compliance of the industry.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister, and you've fitted just neatly in my time frame. Before I head to grants and subsidies, I know that there'll be many people - not only members of parliament but also the community - looking at the terms of reference for ORI. I hope I don't have to come back next year and again talk about a dysfunctional department. I'm sure the secretary doesn't want to be the secretary, or the deputy, or the director, of a dysfunctional area of government. Thank you, that was a statement only. Mr Willie.

5.1 Grants and subsidies

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you provide a breakdown of the COVID-19 grants that were provided for the industry for animal welfare when the racing industry shut down, and which stables received funding, and how much?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. On Thursday 2 April 2020, the Tasmanian Government announced the cessation of racing, effective immediately. The Government was determined to reduce the risk of widespread community infection of COVID-19. Racing industry participants are spread widely throughout rural and regional Tasmania, and typically travel throughout the state for race meetings. Participants also have a relatively higher average age.

The decision to cease racing was based on advice to reduce interregional travel in order to lower the risk of contagion. While the racing industry should be commended for the practices it established to reduce the risk of infection, risk still remained.

On 7 April 2020 the Tasmanian Government announced a support package of around \$2 million per month, which is broadly equivalent to the continuation of the full value of the stakes money, and other code funding continuing to be invested in the industry. The support package was funded through Tasracing with additional assistance, as required, through a government loan. The details of the support package were discussed and agreed with industry stakeholders and were released on Wednesday 8 April 2020. The package is aimed at retaining participants and incentivising trainers to continue animals in work, rather than send them to agisted properties.

Applications opened on Saturday 10 April 2020 via the Tasracing website. The first round of payments were made on Friday 17 April 2020. The final support package run was made on Friday 19 June 2020. A total of 723 applications have been received during the program, and the following assistance by code has been provided: in the thoroughbred code, the number of trainers was 76; the number of horses was 898; with the total amount being just over \$2 million. In the standardbreds, the number of trainers was 111; the number of horses 653; and the total amount was just under \$1.5 million.

Mr WILLIE - My question, minister, was which stables got funding?

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like me to continue with the greyhounds before I provide you with your -

Mr WILLIE - My question is about the stables.

Ms HOWLETT - The stables, and the breakdown of the stables, is a matter for Tasracing. I don't have that information on me, but I'm sure you can ask that in GBE hearings.

Mr WILLIE - This is a matter for you, minister. Has the department audited how that COVID-19 grant money was used, and can you guarantee that each horse, where the amount was claimed, that the horse was still alive when racing resumed?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question, and that is a matter for Tasracing.

Mr WILLIE - You're going to pass the buck as the Minister for Racing, and not answer the question.

Ms HOWLETT - No, that is a matter for Tasracing. We're in our own scrutiny right now, and it's a matter for Tasracing.

Mr WILLIE - You're the Racing minister, you'd know the answer.

Mr BAKER - It wasn't administered by us, Mr Willie.

Ms HOWLETT - No, it was administered through Tasracing.

CHAIR - But the money was provided to Tasracing, through this output group?

Ms HOWLETT - No. It was provided through Tasracing.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. You might be able to answer this one then, minister. Were any complaints made to ORI about the use of that money?

Mr BAKER - Not that we are aware, but again, Mr Willie I'm happy to check and come back.

Mr WILLIE - So you'll take that on notice?

Mr BAKER - Yes.

Mr WILLIE - And if there were complaints, were investigations conducted, and if so, what action was taken, if you could take all that on notice.

Mr BAKER - I'll take all of that on notice.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you.

CHAIR - Nothing to add?

Mr WILLIE - No.

CHAIR - All right. Minister, under the grants and subsidies, is the point of consumption tax included in this \$32.7 million?

Mr BAKER - No.

CHAIR - It does not? That's an additional - this is just the funding deed?

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

CHAIR - So can I ask a question in regard to that? How much of the \$2.537 million that was paid to Tasracing in June 2021 will be passed on to the three codes? Can we have a breakdown of each code and how much each code received from that \$2.537 million, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a Tasracing question, Chair. I apologise, that's a question for Tasracing and I'll have to take it on notice.

Mr BAKER - We can take it on notice.

CHAIR - When the money is handed over, almost 12 months after it's actually received, but I know that's a question for Treasury, and they'll get that tomorrow; I'm happy to provide it on notice. You as minister, and the department don't have any input into how much each of the codes receive from that point of consumption tax, or any other money that's provided through grants and subsidies to Tasracing, is that correct?

Ms WILSON - The Director of Racing exercises power under the Racing Regulation Act, and the point of consumption tax is unrelated to the Racing Regulation Act, so that's why this is a matter for Tasracing.

CHAIR - But my question again, is that this department has no input at all into how those funds are distributed under that \$32 704 million?

Ms WILSON - The money comes through us and into Tasracing; we're like a post box. The money's provided through a deed. This is an administrative expense on page 316 of our papers, and it goes straight to Tasracing, and they have responsibilities under the act and its constitution to its shareholder members.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right, and the breakup of the point of consumption tax is in accordance with the code funding model.

CHAIR - My follow up question then is how is Tasracing held to account for that money, if it's not through you. Is it only left up to elected members of parliament to provide that scrutiny?

Ms HOWLETT - I can take that on notice, and it's also a question that you can ask in GBEs when the CEO of Tasracing is before you.

CHAIR - Okay. It's very difficult for the codes to negotiate, if they haven't got the department that provides the money to assist. As elected members, we can only do so much. I suggest that there's opportunity to have those conversations with Tasracing as the racing minister, fully supportive of the racing industry.

Mr BAKER - Can I just make two points on that.? The first is that this goes to the review and working out the relationship between the entities and figuring out the best way for the entities to operate. The second one is as secretary, we have a very specific regulatory function, and we've got to be very careful to stay in our lane - excuse the racing term - because if we step out of that lane, we're no longer being the regulator. Our role, as my deputy has correctly pointed out, is a very narrow regulator, as it stands under the act now.

CHAIR - That's why I asked the question of the minister.

Mr BAKER - Yes.

CHAIR - Yes, because that's about the minister's role, if you like, in my view. The minister may agree or disagree, but it's certainly a role for the minister, I'd suggest. I'm sure I'm not the first person to have raised that with you minister, is that correct?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll certainly find that information from Tasracing.

CHAIR - No, but am I the first person to raise that with you?

Ms HOWLETT - I've had many discussions over code allocation.

CHAIR - Exactly.

Members, I do apologise to the member for Elwick who did have another question. He had another meeting. He didn't leave it behind? No. He didn't give it to me either.

Are there any other questions in regard to the grants and subsidies, keeping in mind that the Office of Racing Integrity and Racing Regulation is not in the lane when it comes to grants and subsidies. If not, then minister, on behalf

If not, then, minister, can I, on behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your time today. These are all important questions.

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely.

CHAIR - We will have some questions coming into your office, and we look forward to the responses and then an opportunity to discuss them on the floor of the House at a later time if they're not satisfactory. We always take that opportunity.

I'd like to thank our secretariat support and certainly Hansard as well. I know you probably want to add some thanks before I call the end of the broadcast. So, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to thank my secretary and deputy secretary, Deidre, and my Director of Racing, Justin. I also thank my Chief of Staff behind

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me, Sean Hollick, and all of my advisers today - the lovely Dave Manshanden is here with his input. Thank you very much to my team, all my advisers today and to Sean and all my departmental staff as well. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. We will conclude today's session, thank you, and stop the broadcast.

The Committee adjourned at 7.26 p.m.