



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A**

Hon. Jo Palmer MP

**Thursday 8 June 2023**

### **MEMBERS**

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC;  
Hon Nick Duigan MLC;  
Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair);  
Hon Mike Gaffney MLC (Deputy Chair);  
Hon Dean Harriss MLC; and  
Hon Sarah Lovell MLC.

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

**Hon. Jo Palmer MLC**, Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Disability Services, Minister for Women, Deputy Leader in the Legislative Council

### **Ministerial Office**

Carole Rodger	Chief of Staff
Graham Woods	Senior Adviser - Fishing and Aquaculture
Caroline Atkinson	Senior Adviser - Biosecurity and Water
Amanda Lovell	Adviser – Agriculture
Rochelle Piesse	Adviser - Prevention of Family Violence
Amanda Duigan	Senior Adviser – Women
Senior Adviser -	Disability Services

### **Departmental Staff**

#### **Minister for Primary Industries and Water**

Jason Jacobi	Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
Vanessa Pinto	Chief Operating Officer
Anita Yan	Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Adrian Pearce	Manager, Finance
Deidre Wilson	Deputy Secretary, Primary Industries and Water
Sophie Muller	Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage and Land
Catherine Murdoch	General Manager, Agriculture and Water
Rae Burrows	General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania
Dr Ian Dutton	General Manager, Marine Resources
Jo Crisp	General Manager, Environment
Ashley Bastock	Director Agriculture
Bryce Graham	Manager, Water Assessment
John Diggle	Director, Inland Fisheries Service
Dr Kris Carlyon	Section Head, Wildlife Health and Marine

#### **Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence**

Courtney Hurworth	A/Deputy Secretary Community Partnerships and Priorities
Brett Noble	A/Director, Community Policy and Engagement
Mel Brown	Assistant Director, Community Policy and Engagement
Ingrid Ganley	Director Community and Disability Services

#### **Minister for Women**

Courtney Hurworth	A/Deputy Secretary Community Partnerships and Priorities
Brett Noble	A/Director, Community Policy and Engagement
Rachel Eggleton	Assistant Director, Community Policy and Engagement

#### **Minister for Disability Services**

Jenny Gale	Secretary Department of Premier and Cabinet
Ingrid Ganley	Director Community and Disability Services
Courtney Hurworth	A/Deputy Secretary Community Partnerships and Priorities

**The Committee met at 9.01 a.m.**

**DIVISION 2**

**Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania  
Output Group 2 - Primary Industries and Water**

**2.1 Primary Industries**

**CHAIR** (Ms Forrest) - Good morning, minister. Welcome to the Budget Estimates Committee in the Legislative Council. I invite you to introduce your team members at the table, and if you bring others forward, please introduce them when you do. I also invite you to make an opening statement regarding this portfolio, if you wish.

We will then have a break about 11 a.m. for about 15 minutes, then try to finish Primary Industries and Water. After that we'll go to Inland Fisheries, and move to the Minister for Women before lunch. We will get to Disability Services and Prevention of Family Violence after that.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much, Chair. I would like to introduce, to my left, Ms Deidre Wilson, deputy secretary of Primary Industries and Water, and Catherine Murdoch, general manager of Agriculture and Water. It is lovely to have the support of my amazing team, who were with me until late yesterday, here today as well.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the lands and the waters that we meet on, and have the privilege to call home, and pay my deepest respect to elders past and present.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to provide an update on our commitments and progress in our primary industries and water sectors, which I am incredibly proud to be the minister of.

We have been working hard with industry and stakeholder groups to build on Tasmania's enviable position in both agriculture and fisheries, as well as protecting and enhancing our natural assets and waterways. Tasmania's primary producers continue to punch above their weight, investing in sustainable growth and fostering innovation and value-added production. The Government is supporting these sectors by investing more than \$46 million in primary industries, marine and water resources, and a further \$37 million to reinforce our strong borders and security measures.

The management of Tasmania's water resources is of interest to all Tasmanians, as healthy rivers underpin the state's economy, environment and way of life. We continue to implement projects under our Rural Water Use Strategy, as well as enhancing our understanding and management water resources, reviewing our policy settings and strengthening collaboration between water managers. Building on our investment in the Rural Water Use Strategy, this Budget includes an investment of \$600 000 to progress the modernisation of the state's water information management system.

To ensure our agricultural sector continues to prosper, we need to ensure our biosecurity practices are world leading. This Budget provides \$2.59 million for the Emergency Animal Disease Risk Fund, to ensure we are prepared for and can respond to risks at our borders. The

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Budget also provides an additional \$1.4 million over two years to extend the Weeds Action Fund, which tackles serious weeds that impact on valuable agricultural land and the natural environment. The latest Tasmanian Agri-Food ScoreCard shows the sector is worth \$2.34 billion, and the state's overall agri-food value rose to \$3.52 billion in 2020-21.

The Government is investing in industry-driven agricultural research, with a further \$2 million for the Agricultural Innovation Fund over the next two years.

Investment in these industry-backed projects is a significant boost for the state's agricultural research, development and extension capability which is central to the Government's target to deliver the productivity gains needed to sustainably grow the value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050.

I note that today is World Oceans Day so it's fitting that we'll be discussing our sustainable marine resources. Maintaining our waterways for commercial and recreational fishing remains a focus of this Government. We've continued to build on the more than \$10 million of support provided to the fisheries and aquaculture sectors as they dealt with the effects of COVID-19. We're delivering a range of programs across wild fishery, recreational and aquaculture sectors, that are realising positive outcomes for our unique marine resources, and those who rely on them.

This year and over the forward Estimates we've allocated a further \$7.3 million in targeted investment across this sector to continue this good work. From extending the control program of the long-spined urchin, *Centrostephanus*, to supporting the important Stay Afloat program for commercial fishers, to the continuation of the East Coast Rock Lobster Translocation Program.

Importantly, this Budget also provides targeted funding to support sustainable sea fishing in Tasmania and \$1 million has been allocated over two years to support a flathead recovery program to rebuild stocks, undertake research, and provide targeted fisher education programs in partnership with TARFish.

Chair, thank you for the opportunity to make some opening comments. I am now happy to answer questions on any of the above matters of the Primary Industries and Water portfolio.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We'll work through line by line, so we will start with Primary Industry. We do that in a civilised manner here.

I'll lead with a question about the commitment to grow the value of the agricultural sector tenfold to \$10 billion by 2050. I know that the most recent scorecard is 2020-21. Is there an updated version available? If it is, it would be helpful to actually have something to compare. Footnote three, of the budget papers indicates that we're behind the target, and this is confirmed in at least this version, in the 2020-21 version of the scorecard.

Are we getting on target? What are the reasons for the below-anticipated growth and particularly by sector?

**Ms PALMER** - The figures that you have there are the latest figures. The new scorecard will come out in November 2023.

**CHAIR** - It's only every two years that it comes out, is it?

**Ms WILSON** - We put out the scorecard and then we'll often have an insights document that we put out in between, as a report. There is, and always has been since the inception of the scorecard, a lag in the data. That's because we do rely on ABARES, ABS and other data. Having said that, because we've been doing this over, as you're really well aware because you've asked questions in the past about this, over many years, it does demonstrate the trends in agriculture and we see it as incredibly valuable. As to whether we're meeting the target, I believe last year that the gross value of agricultural production grew by 9 per cent to \$2.34 billion in 2020-21, which puts the Government on target.

**CHAIR** - Is that across all sectors? Are some sectors doing better than others? I want to get a bit of a sector breakdown.

**Ms PALMER** - The latest edition of the Agrifood scorecard shows that 2021 was an exceptional year and, as the deputy secretary, mentioned there was a 9 per cent growth to \$2.34 billion, which does confirm that we are on track to reach the Agrivision 2050 target.

Pasture-based industries accounted for around two-thirds of farmgate value due to favourable seasonal conditions and access to irrigation. The high livestock prices and a record milk production of 961 million litres underpin growth in farmgate value. Dairy was our highest-value agricultural category. It did decrease by 3 per cent to \$490 million as a slightly lower Tasmanian milk price offset the record milk production volumes. The farmgate value of meat increased by 8 per cent to \$665 million in 2021. That would have been with high livestock prices continuing. The ScoreCard also tracks more than agriculture. I have more information if you want it.

**CHAIR** - If you could give it all to us now, that would be helpful.

**Ms PALMER** - The state's overall agri-food value, which includes the \$1.18 billion seafood industry, grew by 9 per cent to \$3.52 billion. The packed and processed value of food was \$5.62 billion in 2020-21, up by 7 per cent on the previous year. Disruptions to international trade and freight services due to COVID-19 impacted food exports, with the value falling to \$874 million. However, 2020-21 was still the highest year on record for value after 2019 and 2020.

**CHAIR** - I noticed the TFGA put out a media release saying they were not happy with the budget, the lack of support for the farmers. According to your information there, dairy prices went back a little bit in terms of [inaudible] but they were still the biggest in the sector. I am interested in why they would say that they needed more support right now, when it is all growing fairly well. Obviously things change. Certainly, weather patterns can change may be heading to a more challenging period for them. Do you have a comment on that?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, I certainly can. I am aware of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association's comments around the state budget. It was good to have those conversations with the chair, also with the CEO, who -

**CHAIR** - After they put out the media release or before?

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**Ms PALMER** - I speak to them very regularly, but I made contact with them before they put out their media release and made it very clear that the priority in this Budget was around health and housing. They could appreciate that there were cuts right across the board. It was not just focused on them. They know that this Government is a firm supporter of our farmers and always will be. We will continue to work with them, of course, on their priorities. We value the enormous contribution our primary producers make, not only to our economy, but also to the social and environmental fabric of our communities.

We make no apology as a Government for prioritising that record spending on those key services, as I mentioned being health, housing and education. This was part of the discussions that I had with the TFGA, and they acknowledged that this benefits all Tasmanians when you have focus on those key services, whatever industry you might work in right across rural and regional Tasmania.

We continue to strongly invest in this sector, especially through innovation. In the 2023-24 state Budget it provides an extra \$2 million for the highly successful Agricultural Innovation Fund, which I am pleased to say the TFGA themselves have recognised as vital for the future. The TFGA has also come out publicly in support of our additional \$2.59 million in funding for the protection of the state's agricultural industry through biosecurity measures.

The peak body also welcomed the \$500 000 allocated to support pre-biosecurity - with bees - with future employment and another apiary officer to protect the state against any introduced diseases that can have critical impact on our pollination services, keeping in mind that we've seen the incursion of the varroa mite in New South Wales. That is in our country and we have to be very careful, which we certainly are being.

Our continued upgrades to the Freer Farm Agriculture Centre of Excellence at the Burnie TasTAFE campus with a further \$1.5 million in the Budget, that is through Mr Ellis with skills and training, but has an impact on the primary industries sector. Also, in this Budget there is an additional \$600 000 over two years to fund a business case and a detailed concept plan to modernise the Water Information Management System. That is going to inform the next stage of development for this project which is really important.

I mentioned the \$1.4 million in my opening comments for tackling the state's serious weed program problem through the Weeds Action Fund, and there's also the allocation of an additional \$255 000 for the Landcare action program which contributes to maintaining sustainable agriculture. There is investment into irrigated water, which we know is absolutely a key strategy to reaching that target of \$10 billion. Our commitment to irrigation development has been maintained with an investment an additional \$9.3 million taking the state's commitment to \$118 million for existing projects and funding for continued investment for investigations by Tas Irrigation.

This budget is preparing Tasmania for the future. We are a really strong advocate for this industry. I do accept the TFGA made numerous requests through their budget submission. They were not all considered, because, there was a clear focus in this budget around those other services, which make a big impact on families, regardless of what industry you may be in.

**CHAIR** - One of the things I hear from the primary producers in my electorate and I am sure others who have rural electorates would have, is the access to housing for primary producers. When you talked about the focus of the budget more on health, housing, and

education, you said that housing is a critical barrier to employment in our primary producers, in dairy and attracting workers in. Was there any comment on that? Do they not see that as an issue for them? If they do, how are you working to support them to have access or work with Homes Tasmania to ensure that housing is built where it is needed? People think that housing needs to be in the towns and cities where the majority of people live, but there is a real pressure point in getting workers into these agricultural areas.

**Ms PALMER** - The shortage of agricultural workers has been a real issue. We know there needs to be housing for them. This is also a planning issue I know has been addressed with the Planning Minister. I have had numerous conversations with farmers the same as you. We recognise the challenges in finding accommodation for workers. The workers' accommodation needs to be considered as part of normal agribusiness workforce planning, especially where businesses rely on a surge of workforce for peak seasonal activities that can be predicted from year to year. Tasmanian farm businesses may be eligible to apply for the Government's AgriGrowth Loan Scheme for capital to purchase or build worker accommodation where the accommodation contributes to productivity gains, and also, of course, where it meets local council requirements.

When it comes to these sorts of issues, this is one of the many issues discussed at the National Agricultural Minister's meetings, because this isn't an isolated issue here in Tasmania. We are seeing these issues right across Australia. It certainly is front and centre of our thinking and conversations we have been having.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any direct interaction with Homes Tasmania regarding this issue?

**Ms PALMER** - Always, as part of my role as agricultural minister, there is the opportunity to advocate and to ensure this is in the consideration of the mind of the Housing minister. There's always that opportunity to have discussions with him.

**CHAIR** - We need to talk to Homes Tasmania because they're now the statutory body or whatever they're called these days, the (indistinct) that sits outside of the general government area now and if they don't know what's needed to (indistinct).

I will move on. Last year we spoke about the impacts of climate change; we talked about the impacts of COVID but we haven't really talked about the impacts of climate change on the agricultural sector and our fisheries, which we will come to later. I note the expansion of the Tasmanian Farm Business Resilience Program has been designed and developed by farmers for farmers, according to the local media reports. The program is noted to build on farm resilience and preparedness for managing the risks to (indistinct) production, and business competitiveness. Where does the state funding commitment come from in the budget? Where is it actually identified? I couldn't find it directly in the budget.

**Ms WILSON** - It's in our general Primary Industries allocation.

**CHAIR** - It's not a separate allocation? It's from within that budget?

**Ms WILSON** - Yes.

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**CHAIR** - How will this be delivered in sectors beyond the dairy sector? Initially, it was rolled out for the dairy sector but how will it be delivered in other sectors and how will the outcomes be measured?

**Ms PALMER** - You would call it a pilot program in the dairy industry, which was -

**CHAIR** - Dairy Tas.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, which is where it started. It was very successful. The feedback from Dairy Tas was positive so we felt it would be beneficial to roll that out and have a further expansion. It's a learning opportunity for farmers. They can access learning opportunities with a very small contribution on their behalf - about \$500 - which will result in up to \$9000 worth of support in being able to look at how they can manage potential risks. Those risks might be coming through climate change and how they can better look at their farm business plans to ensure that they are planning for any risks that could be coming their way so -

**CHAIR** - Where are you rolling it out, which sectors?

**Ms WILSON** - The department is rolling out a key initiative which is the Farm Business Resilience Program which is up to \$4 million of combined Australian and Tasmanian government funding. Tasmania's financial commitment is up to \$1.748 million - I have a very precise number there -

**CHAIR** - Is it based on a ratio with the federal government money, or how was that arrived at?

**Ms WILSON** - It was based on a project plan and the proposal for quite an integrated program of works. Our initial target is for 300 farm businesses to participate in the Farm Business Resilience Program.

You're right, as the minister has indicated, we started with the pilot program delivered by Dairy Tas utilising Our Farm, Our Plan framework. A total of 18 dairy farmers from 13 farms were involved in the pilot. As I said, a program implementation plan followed from that which has been recently signed with the Australian government. That sets out the target to get the additional farm businesses engaged.

**CHAIR** - The other sectors, you mean?

**Ms WILSON** - The other sectors, yes. On 3 June, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE) advertised a request for tenders for industry groups and service providers and the minister promoted that to roll out the program to other industry sectors. We're looking for the broader rollout to commence from July 2023 over the next two years.

The design process involved engagement with the farmers' reference group which recommended the delivery model based on cost commodity and regional farmer groups combined with one-on-one coaching. The farmers will be guided through a standard planning framework of strategic business management, risk, and opportunity analysis, natural resource management, personal and social resilience, succession planning, making decisions and putting the plan into action. It will also have a focus on planning for climate change, sustainable



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irrigation and safe farming practices and that will also involve a WorkSafe Safe Farming Program in which we partner with Justice.

Having been involved over many years on various programs, this design is really integrated and we are very hopeful that our promotion means that we will get a good cross-section of farmers engaged in the program.

**Ms PALMER** - I will add one more thing. One of the real benefits of the way this program is designed, is that it is flexible; it is not a one size fits all. It is an opportunity for farmers from all different areas, working in all different spaces to actually have this program that accommodates their needs. It has that flexibility.

**CHAIR** - I have asked this in many other areas not just here but we can throw as much money as well like at things, we do not measure the outcomes. How are we going to measure the outcomes from this and how will it be reported?

**Ms WILSON** - My understanding is that through our program approach, evaluation will be part of what we need to do. We need to bring Mr Bastock to the table to talk about that.

**Ms PALMER** - Ashley Bastock is the Director of Agriculture.

**CHAIR** - Some more about performance outcomes, not outputs.

**Mr BASTOCK** - Part of the program design is actually included engaging the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA) to do parallel social research and it is part of a monitoring and evaluation learning component that is required as part of the program. They will be working with Dairy Tas, who as the minister said, are already underway with implementing it with the other service providers that we get to work with farms about the learnings. What was picked up? What changed and how do we design? Part of that is trying to go from outputs as you say to outcomes: what has been the change? That -

**CHAIR** - 'Trying to' or are we actually going to get there?

**Mr BASTOCK** - The intent is to try but it is easier to count things than outcomes -

**CHAIR** - I know it is that is why every performance information in this is just output.

**Mr BASTOCK** - The social research side of things is really important to what we are doing to see if we can capture that learning and what has that meant for a farmer, and what it might have meant at an industry level.

**CHAIR** - Surely, you would hope that you would see some measurable change. We are dealing with mitigation of climate change or other risks, surely that would be able to be captured? How a land owner or primary producer has adapted their management, surely?

**Mr BASTOCK** - To go back half a step, the first thing is to make sure that there is an appropriate plan in place. It can be that people already have plans, property management plans, farm water access plans. The first measurable, I admit it is an output, is to actually make sure we take them through a planning process. As part of that, what does that mean and that is where the work of TIA is to look at that social research.

The aim of the program is better decisions more often. That is really what it is about and that is why the Commonwealth are funding, rather than when we find ourselves in a drought and we are then into crisis support. We have been there before. One of the intents is hopefully better planning upfront, better decisions more often.

**CHAIR** - Better resilience.

**Mr BASTOCK** - Yes, and that is exactly right - it goes to the heart - and resilience.

**CHAIR** - The outcome will be fewer requests for help when we are in a drought. I do not imagine that would happen either. The TIA work on this, how is that funded? Is that part of the funding itself?

**Mr BASTOCK** - Yes, it is essentially part of the program and in parallel.

**CHAIR** - Further on climate changes and the impacts of climate change, what specific advice and/or actions are being taken by the department to address the impacts of climate change and to mitigate the increase risk to the agricultural sector? As you mentioned earlier, minister, the fisheries. We can do more for fisheries later but I want to talk broadly about climate and the impact of the change.

**Ms PALMER** - Climate-ready agriculture is one of the focus areas of our competitiveness of Tasmania's agriculture in the 2050 white paper. Accordingly, the Government committed to supporting agricultural producers to reduce their emissions, adapt to and be prepared for the impacts of climate change, and leverage opportunities for growth. The two key initiatives of the Government, one we have already discussed being the Farm Business Resilience Program and the other is the Carbon Farming Advice Rebate Pilot Program. These programs complement a range of climate change measures, including our renewable energy goals, net zero emissions by 2030 target and recent limits to the Climate Change (State Action) Act 2008. I do not want to go into the Minister for Climate Change area.

I can give you some more information regarding carbon funding, which is one of those two key initiatives. The \$250 000 Carbon Farming Advice Rebate Pilot Program was a 2020-21 election commitment. The \$250 000 was originally allocated to the Tasmanian Climate Change Office, then transferred to NRE Tasmania, so that you can follow that in the budget papers. The program provides primary producers with rebates of up to \$10 000 for advice sought about costs and benefits of accessing carbon credits, auditing requirements and on-ground actions that are eligible for carbon credits.

The rebates are available as \$1 for each \$1 spent - dollar-matched - on eligible advice. Individual rebates are limited to that maximum amount of \$10 000. The program will remain open until all the funds are expended. I am advised there are 20 approved advisers under the program who can provide that advice. As at 13 April 2023, five producers had applied.

**CHAIR** - Do you know where they are in the state?

**Ms PALMER** - I might ask the deputy secretary, but I will just finish telling you about the program. Five producers have applied and been approved for a rebate of advice; \$50 000

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has been committed. To encourage the uptake of the program, an additional \$10 000 was transferred for the provision of two statewide workshops in conjunction with TIA in 2021-22. There were over 120 participants attending those workshops.

Other recent promotional activities include AgriGrowth attending Landcare Tasmania environmental markets and carbon farming events. Carbon farming was a feature of the NRE Tasmania display at Agfest. It was good to see the interaction that was had there. Due to the stakeholder feedback that we have received, the primary producer guidelines were updated in March this year to clarify the roles of producers and advisers, as well as make it clear what was eligible to claim for the rebate. Just checking the figures I have here, I do not think there is a breakdown here.

**Ms WILSON** - No, I don't believe I have that.

**CHAIR** - Can we get that? I talk to a lot of farmers on King Island about these matters. I do not know if anyone from there has applied.

**Ms PALMER** - Just let me see. We do not have that information here on hand, but we will attempt to get that for you before the end of this session.

**CHAIR** - Otherwise, we can put it as a question on notice.

**Ms PALMER** - I think we will be able to get it before the end of the session; we will certainly try to do that.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Minister, you have already alluded to that it has been a pretty good year on our dairy farms around Tasmania. I understand there is work being done to plan for the future in that sector and keep it ticking over. I am just wondering if you are able to provide some information about what the Government is doing in the dairy sector, particularly to support its long-term sustainability and issues arising from climate change?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you for the question on this important topic. Our dairy industry is one of our great success stories, worth a massive \$490 million at farmgate in 2020-21, which we saw in the agri-food ScoreCard. The recent Agribusiness Insights Report shows the dairy industry has continued to perform well, with increased milk production for the seven months to January 2023. They had quite a strong autumn season. This is off the back of an increase in the value of exports at record high prices.

Our dairy industry makes up 10.8 per cent of the country's total milk volume. It is no wonder I read only last week the business confidence among Tasmanian dairy farmers is among the highest we have in the nation. The Tasmanian Government is pleased to be supporting this valuable sector to continue adapting to a changing climate and maintaining its long-term sustainability.

It is great to announce today that a new \$243 000 two-year project to be led by Dairy Tas will assist dairy farmers to better understand their role to adapting to climate change and being sustainable in their practice. Dairy Tas will support farmers to consider the use of management of dairy effluent, look at options to reduce fertiliser and methane emissions and to understand their greenhouse gas emissions. The project also contributes to the Dairy Australia national soils nutrients and irrigation programs that support reducing greenhouse emissions on farms.

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The project directly contributes to the supporting climate-ready agriculture priority in the Tasmanian Government's Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050 White Paper and the project also aims to help reach the Tasmanian Government's newly legislated emissions reduction target for the state of net-zero emissions or lower from 2030. This project is in addition to another partnership we recently announced with Dairy Tas for a program which will give farmers the tools they need, as we have just spoken about, to manage risk, including adapting to climate change and improving the resilience of their farming businesses.

Dairy Tas has successfully run that pilot. It is part of more than \$4 million of the Tasmanian Farm Business Resilience Program that is under the Australian Future Drought Fund. This program is being rolled out widely.

**CHAIR** - We have covered this already.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, but we certainly want to encourage farmers to take up the advantage of this and this is really going to secure them in a sustainable manner, but also, to give them a competitive edge because we know the world is watching and wants to be consuming products we know are ethically and sustainably grown.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, can you provide for the committee an estimated total expenditure for this financial year or at least, figures you have to date for any consultants engaged through your department, advertising and marketing, travel expenses and ministerial and senior executive salaries, please?

**Ms PALMER** - I will pass to the Deputy Secretary.

**Ms WILSON** - Summary of consultancies above \$10 000 awarded as at the 31 March 2023 by the Primary Industries and Water portfolio, there were 10 consultancies - \$700 396. Travel, as at the 31 March 2023, total expenditure for intrastate and interstate travel and accommodation was approximately \$948 000.

**CHAIR** - It seems a lot for interstate. There is no international travel in that?

**Ms WILSON** - That is for the whole of the agency, for PIW it is \$403 000. Yes. Apologies, I gave the full figure yesterday.

**CHAIR** - Was there any international travel at all?

**Ms WILSON** - There could have been in PIW. For the whole department for international travel it was \$1 400. I do not have a breakdown if that was a PIW expense. Advertising expenditure as at the 31 March - PIW approximately \$103 000.

That is those. SES salaries? We've got that.

**CHAIR** - If you don't have a gender breakdown of your staff, we might go straight to that after we've done the salaries.

**Ms WILSON** - I do have that.

**CHAIR** - Across PIW.

**Ms WILSON** - I will do SES first. SES salaries are \$4 568 690. Our ministerial staffing: no payments have been made for ministerial staff in this reporting period for 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023. There is an agreed funding arrangement for one advisor for PIW at a cost of \$136 000 per annum.

You want the gender breakdown for PIW?

**CHAIR** - Yes. Across band levels if you can, not just a wider figure.

**Ms WILSON** - Yes. Across band levels. Can you go through each one you want? Then I'll make sure I've got the right things. I've got gender diversity by agency, I've got it by business unit and by classification. Are these the three you want?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WILSON** - In terms of the whole agency...

**CHAIR** - If you can do the whole agency, the high level, and perhaps provide the other information in a table to us?

**Ms WILSON** - That would be fine.

**CHAIR** - Rather than reading out all those numbers. That would be good.

**Ms WILSON** - That's fine. We've 1575 staff as of March 2023. There were 769 males, which is 48.83 per cent. Females were 804, which is 51.05 per cent. We had two undisclosed at 0.12 per cent. As noted, that means our female to male ratio is slightly more females, probably reflective of the community.

By classification, as at 31 March, do we table that, minister?

**Ms PALMER** - I think we should table it. I'm more than happy to read it in across the classification, if you want to.

**CHAIR** - Is that broken down by band levels?

**Ms WILSON** - By numbers, female or male, undisclosed, grand total, and percentage of females.

**CHAIR** - If you could table that, I'm interested to know whether you've identified any gender pay gap through this, and it's hard to know without looking at it whether it's even likely. If you could table that and then the question that follows is: is there an identified gender pay gap here?

**Ms WILSON** - I did put some thought into this. Because we are paid at band classifications based on a merit process, that means that if you're at a band 4, male or female, you're paid -

**CHAIR** - Yes, I understand that, but it is how many women are higher up the tree.

**Ms WILSON** - In that case, we do have information on that we can quickly go to. For a band 7, which won't take too long, which is around when we get into supervisory roles, there are 62 females and 69 males, which means we've got 47 per cent females. At band 8 there's 24 females and 32 males, which is 43 per cent female. At band 9 there's two females and seven males, which is 22 per cent females.

**CHAIR** - So we do have a gender pay gap going on.

**Ms WILSON** - Hang on. At SES, we've got 14 females, 10 males, which means 58 per cent women.

**CHAIR** - Can we work out what the gender pay gap is across the department?

**Ms WILSON** - We'll be able to provide basically a total of the salaries paid, male and female, at each band level. Whether that demonstrates a gender pay gap in the sense of how the private sector talk about it in terms of when people come in at starting level and in the senior executive, as I've said, I think that's a slightly different scenario in the State Service and you've gone to the heart of it which is how many people are at senior levels. What I can tell you having been in the agency for many, many years, is these figures of female representation at the senior levels are the highest I have seen and you know with 51 per cent of females in the agency that has shifted. My recollection was we were sitting at about 33 per cent at senior levels, 36 per cent some time ago in some of these senior band levels and we are now seeing at 47, 43, 58. The band line there is 9 of those and there does seem to be a discrepancy. Those band lines are specialist positions, that is not to indicate that women cannot be specialist, it just happens to be that because there have been specialised roles-

**CHAIR** - It takes a while for it to wash through I understand that.

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, the normal recruitment process just happened to fall that way.

**CHAIR** - If we are going to be serious about gender equality and I know this is the next portfolio minister, but we do need to get a benchmark in time. It is certainly better than what is has been in the past without a shadow of a doubt, but we do need measures.

**Ms PALMER** - To be honest I am actually really proud of this, and when you see that top level the SES where you have 58 per cent of women, we are seeing gender equality across this department. There are some areas where you know the band 9 which are the specialist positions the deputy secretary spoke about. Sometimes, you cannot always have gender equality because the experts you need may be male may be female, you have to get the right person for the job. When I look at these classifications, it ranges from the cadet positions all the way through to SES and there is gender equality across this department, as it should be.

**Ms WILSON** - We have developed a term of measures though, appreciate what you are saying because sometimes these figures can shift and you have really got to watch what is happening through the lower levels with diversity recruitment and gender. The agencies developed a three-year (inaudible) in our ETAS action plan, which brings a range of actions together to develop a more inclusive and collaborative environment and it is about all employees feeling a sense of belonging. We have engaged in initiatives; International Women's Day, NAIDOC Week, walk for the elimination of violence against women and

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children and we have an annual role and diversity calendar that has been developed to promote significant dates and events. One of the things we are finding is flexible work arrangements that can be applied now, some of our frontline service people they have particular rosters etc but for many of our staff we have flexible work arrangements which really does assist with that work-life balance if they choose to have children and that keeps women and men, but particularly women in the workforce.

**CHAIR** - We would be happy to table that.

**Ms LOVELL** - And men as well who are caring. It is an interesting conversation, because even the band level of specialist raises questions about how specialists are being sought out. Potentially, there is a deeper question about being able to get a specialty and being able to study. It is certainly something that needs constant reflection.

**CHAIR** - It would be helpful to see how you develop in the measures though because this comes to your other portfolio minister with the gender snapshot, yes, we need to have very robust measures and measures that can be described as well as reported on to be meaningful. This Government has done a good job in increasing the number of women in seated positions in boards and that sort of thing, but if we want true gender equality.

**Ms LOVELL** - It has to be across all levels not just board level

**Ms PALMER** - The table I have is actually across the whole agency. This table actually goes across a number of portfolios.

**CHAIR** - We would be happy to break for you to get a modified table, that is fine.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, we will do that.

**CHAIR** - You can table it whenever it is prepared, whatever section we are in. I want to move to another area. Tasmania provides services to landholders, farmers and graziers -

**Ms LOVELL** - Just before you do, could I just go back to the travel expenses question? I want to clarify, the international travel, the figure we were given was \$1400. That includes the minister's travel, is that right?

**Ms WILSON** - That included our expenditure, NRE Tas.

**Ms LOVELL** - I had a question about, there was a claim for travel for the minister, for you to travel in January, international travel, \$4303.66, in the disclosures. What was that trip for?

**Ms PALMER** - That was representing the Premier on a trade mission to New Zealand.

**Ms LOVELL** - When was that trade mission?

**Ms PALMER** - Let me check, I will have to seek some advice. I am trying to remember which kid's birthday -

**CHAIR** - Can you remember their birth date?

**Ms LOVELL** - Probably not this week.

**Ms PALMER** - That New Zealand trade mission was from 31 July until 5 August 2022.

**Ms LOVELL** - I another question on another matter, but I am happy to come back. I had a question about the wild deer. I understand that federal money was provided for aerial shooting of deer in the Walls of Jerusalem. When was the Central Plateau protected area included in that program? Did they include any private property on the Central Plateau?

**Ms PALMER** - That is a matter for the minister for Parks. I realise that the deer plan is in my space, but that is actually a question for the minister for Parks.

**Ms LOVELL** - Okay. The line item says -

**CHAIR** - Put that through to Committee B.

**Ms LOVELL** - All right. But this line item talks about this.

**CHAIR** - If I may, I had a question related to deer as well. There was a recent deer cull. Is that the one you are talking about?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes. That is for Parks, is it?

**CHAIR** - That does not fall under your area, a deer cull?

**Ms PALMER** - No, that was through the minister for Parks.

**Ms LOVELL** - Can I ask then about the funding. In the footnote it talks about the implementation of wild fallow deer management. What is that for if it is not for the cull?

**Ms PALMER** - I will hand that to Ms Murdoch.

**Ms MURDOCH** - Regarding the funding for the deer, the implementation of the Wild Fallow Deer Management Plan, that funding is to deliver our peri-urban deer control programs. We are also implementing the Nature Conservation Deer Farming Regulation with that funding. We have employed a property-based wildlife management officer to work with farmers to develop wildlife management plans which include deer, so that farmers can manage those on their property in accordance with their objectives.

Also, we have done a study into the economic value of hunting in Tasmania, which is in draft form. We're working on that project. There is ongoing monitoring for deer and the DeerScan project which we encourage everybody to actively participate in so if you see a deer you go to the DeerScan website and record it.

**CHAIR** - Deer 'scam' or 'scan'?

**Ms MURDOCH** - Scan.

**CHAIR** - I thought that is what you were saying.



**Ms MURDOCH** - We have a series of monitoring camera traps out in the field in those areas particularly. Next week the team is going to the Tasman Peninsula to deploy those there. That's informing our ongoing population and, we have business-as-usual core staff who do deer permits so that's what that funding is relating to.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I wish they'd do the same for cat management in the state so that people can report feral cats.

**CHAIR** - They move pretty fast. Deer do to, I suppose.

Are there any other questions on Output group 2.1? If not, we'll move to 2.2 - Supervision of poppy and hemp crops.

**Output Group 2**  
(Primary Industries and Water)

**2.2 Supervision of poppy and hemp crops**

**Mr GAFFNEY** - There's not a lot to this one. We heard yesterday about the decrease in the number of licences because of the worldwide trends, which is fine. There's not a lot of change or fluctuation in the budget figure here, which is good. You might be able to give us some information. Now that the medicinal cannabis farm has been sold - bought by Blue Buffalo Ltd in 2022 - has the Government had any involvement or interaction or communication with that facility?

**Ms PALMER** - Not as far as I am aware. The advice as the minister but also not as far as the department is aware.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That surprises me. I thought that would have been one area that they would have been involved with or made contact with. It's a sizeable farm that has been sold on an initiative from the Government with medicinal cannabis.

**Ms PALMER** - I will ask the deputy secretary to comment.

**Ms WILSON** - My broad recollection is that medicinal cannabis comes under the control of the Poisons Act and the Poisons Act is a matter primarily for the minister for Health, particularly medicinal cannabis. We regulate industrial hemp under the Industrial Hemp Act. Regarding the sale or otherwise of properties, unless there's a specific interest that we have, we would not have any particular engagement. That would be my understanding.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That's interesting. As it's a certified organic farm I thought that might have been under this area, but that's fine.

**Ms WILSON** - Certification is not through the agency. It's through third party accreditation bodies.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I do not have any other questions in this area.

**CHAIR** - I have a couple. I am interested in how many licensed industrial hemp crops there are now.

**Ms PALMER** - The number of active commercial licences - that is growers - in given years, I have a comparison here. In 2017-18 there were 35; in 2018-19 there were 49; in 2019-20 there were 47; in 2020-21 there were 33; and in 2021-22 there were 26.

The number of commercial licences, noting that licences are issued for up to five years, in 2017-18 there were 58; 2018-19 there were 75; 2019-20 there were 89; 2020-21 there were 87; and 2021-22 there were 84. I also have hectares. In 2017-18, 464 hectares; 2018-19, 1361 hectares; 2019-20, 1569 hectares; 2020-21, 1012 hectares; and in 2021-22, there were 711.

**CHAIR** - It fluctuates a bit, doesn't it?

Mike, did you ask how many breaches there's been under the Poisons Act?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yesterday, it was about the interferences they had was less but not under the Poisons Act.

**CHAIR** - Yes. There can be other breaches under the Poisons Act in this area. Have there been any breaches?

**Ms WILSON** - The key thing that the Poppy Advisory Control Board manages is poppy crops. We don't go beyond that in terms of breaches of the Poisons Act, so interferences are the key thing that we monitor.

**CHAIR** - That's the only thing they do?

**Ms WILSON** - It's the keeping that we monitor.

**CHAIR** - I think it went from 1.73 to 1.17 or something. It was down.

## **Output Group 2 - Primary Industries and Water**

### **2.3 Water Resources Management**

**Mr DUIGAN** - An update on the status of the Rural Water Use Strategy, please, Minister.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you for the question. Freshwater underpins the Tasmanian economy, environment and way of life. It's also a key enabler for this Government's vision to grow the value of Tasmanian agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. We're investing in the Rural Water Use Strategy as our blueprint for managing the state's freshwater resources. The strategy will ensure sustainable outcomes for rural water users, communities and the environment, and maintain Tasmania's competitive advantages in a changing climate.

There are currently 12 key projects underway, including initiatives to improve river health, groundwater assessment, to review the science underpinning our water allocation framework - that's including catchment yields - and also water accountability. The strategy

also includes the development of a new statewide water quality monitoring program, which will be developed collaboratively with Hydro Tasmania, Tasmanian Irrigation, TasWater, Inland Fishery Service, Environment Protection Authority and the department.

These projects are all providing new information to inform Tasmania's future water management arrangements to ensure integrated, fair and efficient use and regulation of our water resources. All projects are currently meeting their project time lines, which is fantastic, and will be formally reported on in August 2023 as part of the next report on the strategy.

The total investment allocated to deliver current projects under the Rural Water Use Strategy is now \$5.08 million. Our Government is committing a total of \$3.86 million, including an initial \$1.5 million over four years to implement the River Health Advisory Project, and \$535 000 in the 2022-23 Budget to complete three freshwater science projects. The Australian Government is also investing a total of \$1.22 million to complete the three freshwater sites projects, and to support the delivery of these projects the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has employed eight additional staff. In addition to the Rural Water Use Strategy, the Tasmanian Government is also working with the Commonwealth to negotiate a new National Water Initiative in 2023.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, minister. Recognising that there are a lot of projects underway, there is a great volume of monitoring and therefore data being fed into the system, I wonder if you could give us information about the work of the water managers and data custodians group.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes. The Rural Water Use Strategy really is our state's blueprint for managing our freshwater resources for now and also into the future. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania established the Water Managers and Data Custodian Working Group in July 2022 to support implementation of the strategy and to collate and review existing data sets and monitoring programs in the state related to surface and groundwater data.

The group consists of representatives from Hydro Tasmania, Tasmanian Irrigation, TasWater, Inland Fishery Service, Environment Protection Authority and the department. Specifically, the group is supporting the department to design a new, collaborative statewide water quality monitoring program, which is due for release in August. Our implementation of a statewide water quality monitoring program will provide a contemporary assessment of the status of the quality of our freshwater resources.

It will inform future water management initiatives and also compliments the river health monitoring program, which is already in place. The group is investigating a range of data sharing and information issues to facilitate the collation and the review of state wide river health and water quality data. The water managers and data custodians working group has also enabled water managers and regulators to discuss issues and generally improve information sharing across government agencies and key stakeholders. It really is quite a good step in the right direction.

The water managers and data custodians' group were instigated by the Rural Water Roundtable which was established in August of 21 and that was to institute greater communication and collaboration between water managers, regulators and stakeholders. The roundtable provides the Government with external perspectives on how rural water use strategy

can be delivered and has been a catalyst for two-way communication between water managers, the stakeholders and the regulators. Topics covered by the Rural Water Roundtable include rural water use strategy and implementation progress, collaboration of partnerships in waterway management and monitoring, waterway health, climate change and the national water initiative including Aboriginal water interests.

**CHAIR** - With the quality of water, quality assurance standards of performance indicator on page 156, which rivers and streams have been tested around the state for water quality?

**Ms PALMER** - Just seeking some information to your question, but can I just answer one of your previous questions? You asked about the five farms involved in the carbon farming rebate scheme and to date there is one in Dorset, one in Smithton, one in Buckland, one in the southern midlands and one in Evandale.

**Ms WILSON** - The quality of water information performance measure is about the accuracy of stream flow information on an annual basis. It is about making sure we have quality information to understand what is happening in our riverine systems. Continuous river flow data collected 80 stream gage stations. Continuous water quality data PH stability electrical conduct activity dissolved oxygen and temperature commenced at 13 sites. Depth of ground water and ground water temperature collected at 88 ground water sites. Collecting spot sample water quality data PH stability, electrical conductivity and dissolved oxygen temperature at all 80 stream gaging stations on average five times per year, during Autumn and Spring river health surveys.

**CHAIR** - And the locations?

**Ms WILSON** - We do have locations, but I do not have the full list of 80 on me.

**Ms PALMER** - That is publicly available. The stream flow water quality and ground water data s collected by NRE Tas is available on the NRE Tasmania water information Tasmanian web portal. You can go there to find that, as is the stream flow data for Tas Irrigation and selected Hydro Tasmania sites. My understanding is NRE Tas has recently published the latest sampling rounds results and historical data for 53 long-term river health monitoring sites via that-

**CHAIR** - Is the Welcome River one of the rivers?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, I am being advised it is.

**CHAIR** - Can we have some information about how is the river health of the Welcome River? I am not going to look up the site right now, because I am sitting here chairing the committee. I would just like some information, because this has been the river polluted by dairy operations in that area of Circular Head. It was also issued with EPA notices. I am interested in how that is going.

**Ms PALMER** - You are getting very operational. I am going to see what we can get. We do not have that detail of information here at the table, but we will attempt to get that information for you before the end of the session. I will let you know if we can get it. If you could just ensure that there is time at the end.

**CHAIR** - Yes, and if you do not, we will write to you so you can provide it later. It would be helpful, too, in terms of having information together for the committee, if you could also produce the list of the rivers and streams on that list.

**Ms PALMER** - I think that would be quite easy to get our hands on that, because it is publicly accessible.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions on this output group?

## **Output Group 2 - Primary Industries and Water**

### **2.4 Marine Resources**

**CHAIR** - There is a bit of a change of the guard.

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, I would like to introduce Dr Ian Dutton, the General Manager for Marine Resources.

**Mr HARRISS** - Minister, there is a scalefish rule review happening at the moment. Can you tell me about the consultation process and the community engagement through that? How is that working? Has that happened?

**Ms PALMER** - It certainly has. It has been quite an extensive community consultation process. It actually just closed on 5 June. There has been the standard way that community consultation is done. People had the opportunity to send submissions in. On top of that, we also took a team out around the state. I will get Dr Dutton to speak to that in a moment in more detail. The team went out around the state so that people had the opportunity to ask questions and to give feedback directly, which was quite fantastic.

It went statewide. At Agfest, there was a big opportunity there. The engagement there was pretty phenomenal. There was also an online webinar about depleted species. We had an online webinar for recreational gill nets. We had open consultation in Devonport, Burnie, Smithton, Strahan, Triabunna, Bicheno, St Helens, Bridport, Launceston, Hobart, Wynyard and Ulverstone, Stanley, Eaglehawk Neck, Lindisfarne, Dover and Flinders Island as well. We also had information that was sent out to 30 000 stakeholders via email, which was to notify them.

**Dr DUTTON** - It's 34 000.

**Ms PALMER** - We even had a situation where some of our team, unfortunately, became unwell and we had a week when we were not able to fulfil the commitment that we had made to some of these communities, so we extended the public consultation by a week to ensure that once our team had recovered they were able to go. We really wanted to make sure that we had a good statewide coverage, and that there were lots of opportunities, whether it was online or face to face - because people communicate differently - that there was wide public consultation around that.

**Mr HARRISS** - Were all the scheduled communities done? You noted the week that got postponed - they were all covered though through that?

**Dr DUTTON** - Yes, we did cover all of them. The latter couple, as the minister indicated, were a little out of sync because of COVID-19. We deferred a couple of things down the southern part of the state by a few days just to enable us to cover the staffing.

**Mr HARRISS** - Following on from that, I know that the sand flathead, as I understand, have been on the 'depleting' list for almost 10 years and then in 2022 changed to 'depleted'. If the bag limit of two comes into place, that takes it down from 20 - I understand there is the 10 in place at the moment - but I'm wondering where that goes from 'depleting' to 'depleted'?

**CHAIR** - Where is the line?

**Mr HARRISS** - Yes, that's right. Over that 10 years, it's my understanding, it's been 'depleting'.

**Ms PALMER** - It's related to biomass. That's how it's how it's measured but for that level of technical explanation I'll ask Dr Dutton to answer that.

**Dr DUTTON** - There are a couple of measures of stock status around Australia that are used commonly. There's an online app called the Status of Australian Fish Stocks. In Tasmania we have 49 stocks that are assessed, 30 of those are currently assessed as sustainable; about 11 are assessed as depleted, including six of these species that we've gone out to consult on, including, importantly, the sand flathead because it's such an important iconic species. It measures the number. A simple measure is the level of abundance so when a stock falls below 20 per cent of the naturally occurring biomass or the volume of the stock, that's when a trigger is initiated and when we really have to take action.

The other issue with sand flathead is that if you look at the distribution by size class over time, we also have is fish getting generally smaller. There's very little chance for a sand flathead in Tasmania to grow above it's legal limit of 32 centimetres currently so we're effectively creating a -

**CHAIR** - Because they get caught.

**Dr DUTTON** - They get caught so the breeding females are out of the population. We have introduced a thing called Fishing Induced Evolutionary Change where, because of recreational fishing, we are forcing ourselves to have smaller and smaller fish. It's very uncommon now to catch sand flathead. As I grew up on the north-west coast and the east coast catching fish routinely, as a standard I wouldn't take home anything less than 40 centimetres; now I'm taking home 32-centimetre fish which is really not as good a fish to be taking home.

**Ms PALMER** - Not at the moment though, Dr Dutton, because it's (inaudible).

**CHAIR** - Is he breaching the law?

**Dr DUTTON** - I haven't been fishing -

**CHAIR** - In relation to that, where is the process now?

**Dr DUTTON** - The public submissions have closed; we had a very significant response. On Monday night, our team was rapidly analysing the submissions. It takes a lot of work to go

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through those submissions. In addition to the recreational consultation which we just talked about there's also a commercial component for this. We have consulted particularly on calamari, for example, and in addition to all those we also have one-on-one or small group meetings with more than 50 individual commercial fishers around the state in parallel, hence the Smithton visits, for example.

**CHAIR** - How many calamari fishermen, or fisher people, in Smithton did you meet with? There were some who didn't know it was going on. We talked about this in the previous forum.

**Ms PALMER** - When you say there were some who didn't know what was going on do you mean about the opportunity?

**CHAIR** - The opportunity for one-on-one meetings.

**Ms PALMER** - We did get that information to you in that briefing that was held.

**CHAIR** - I am interested in how many people you have spoken to in Smithton who are calamari fishermen, particularly?

**Dr DUTTON** - I do not have the numbers with me. I could quickly text my staff for that number.

**Ms PALMER** - Are you just looking at the west coast or do you want the breakdown of the entire -

**CHAIR** - No. I am particularly interested in fisher people from Smithton who are commercial fishers of calamari, who notionally have an opportunity to have one-to-one meetings under the framework discussed in the briefing we had. How many individuals actually had meetings with the departmental people?

**Ms PALMER** - We will seek to get that information for you before the end of the session.

**Mr HARRISS** - I want to understand the process of going from a 20-bag limit to a proposed two-bag limit over that time, where it goes from depleting. Like the Chair said, where's that line? I am trying to get a rationale about why it would not go to, say in 2018, when it is depleting and you mentioned the 20 per cent level. We get to I have no idea, 40 per cent, why wouldn't it say then a 10-bag limit. When you talk about recreational fishing, it is going to affect a fair few now if it goes down to two and I understand the reasons for that, but you are talking about a small percentage now from a 35 to 38.

**Ms PALMER** - I will refer to Dr Dutton. But I will start by saying in 2015 the species was identified as depleting. At that stage, there was a bag limit of 30. That was cut down to 20. There was, in the short term, quite a good response to that. There was some improvement that was seen initially. Unfortunately, that trend did not continue. The information was given to my office, at the end of last year, that the science was now saying this species was indeed depleted. That's why, as soon as I got that information, I worked very closely with the department to see what levers were available to me, as a minister to make an immediate emergency, for want of a better word, cut to the bag limit, and also to increase the size limit from 32 up to 35 per cent flathead. That is not an easy thing to do, because proper process is

that you consult, but I felt with the information being presented to me, there needed to be immediate action. We found a way that I could do that.

Now we have the opportunity, a little bit of breathing space where we can do the proper consultation and we can get all of that information in. We have had the science peer-reviewed. We are waiting for that information to come in. It's a bit like a jigsaw puzzle. I had to pull that emergency lever really initially, because of the severity of the situation. For further explanation on what that actual line is and when it goes from depleting to depleted, I will hand to Dr Dutton.

**Dr DUTTON** - Our science work is all done in partnership through a long-standing agreement with the University of Tasmania to Institute of Marine Antarctic studies. At the end of last year, they compiled - it takes a way to pull the data together as there is an extraordinary amount of science underneath this assessment. They put together a scale fish assessment across all of our scale fish species which underpinned this review package. This really reaffirms the trend we crossed that line, as the minister indicated from depleting to depleted, which is where really urgent action is required. There are seven species we put out for consultation, one of which calamari is depleting, but it has been the subject of quite a detailed consultation process for a number of years now. The others were at a point where we really need to take action very quickly.

In the case of sand flathead, we also asked IMAS to model for us and all this is on the NRE [tasfishing.gov.tas](http://tasfishing.gov.tas) website. We asked him to model for us what the scenarios were that would achieve that recovery. In order to go back to a sustainable fishing level to 40 per cent of that natural biomass, we believe we can recover sand flathead to that level within four to six years by taking action. Obviously, it varies from place to place, and a straight-line correlation between population pressure and distribution. The area that we have proposed to make the strictest cuts, the two-bag limit proposal, is in the south-eastern part of the sand flathead range, but for the rest of Tasmania it's five flathead bag limit proposal.

So, it's not a severe reduction, still significant, but we think that through those measures and through introducing the slot limit that I talked about, which would enable particularly females, because females grow faster than males of sand flathead, we'd achieve that recovery. Every species has its own way of living and its own life history and for sand flathead, I am confident, it is not a recruitment-limited fishery; there are a lot of young flathead out there coming into the fishery, but when they hit that 32- or now 35-centimetre line they are fished out of the fishery.

I think within a few years of taking this action, we have the chance to recover the stock, which is a much more optimistic output than I have for certain species, for example abalone, once they are gone, they are gone.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you. I have some information regarding the fishers who attended the sessions in Smithton. There were four calamari fishers in Smithton and I am advised that there were five in Stanley. I am just being advised, for your information, that all of the fishers in that area are also written to, to advise them.

**CHAIR** - In hard copy? They may not have got it right on their boat. One I spoke to didn't seem to be aware of that.



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In regard to the salmon plan, I note that you are reviewing the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 and the marine Farming Planning Act 1995. Can you update the committee as to what likely changes are to be made to those two acts or at what stage of the process it is?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much for that question; I will pass to the deputy secretary.

**Ms WILSON** - On the Living Marine Resources Management Act, we have a steering committee and we have started that process of review. Our plan is to release a white paper later this year which outlines some proposals for reform. We are also considering whether there are some amendments to that act that could improve it, but we are not at the stage of saying what we are going to be putting forward because the minister will put out the white paper later this year. We did put out a discussion paper, we have received feedback on that and we have been engaging.

One of the things I would say is we think that the timing of putting the white paper out later this year is ideal considering the amount of consultation we have been doing on the salmon plan and this important scale fish review. We need to be able to ensure that people have the opportunity to engage for a bit of clearance. It's going to start to set a vision and a framework for the Living Marine Resources Management Act and we want to make sure we get that engagement.

On the review of the Marine Farming Planning Act, that is a commitment under the Salmon Plan and the first stage will be to review to determine if there is a requirement for amendment and then advice will go to the minister about that. We believe, in terms of staging, that we would be doing the review in parallel with the Living Marine Resources Management Act but that the Living Marine Resources Management Act comes first.

**CHAIR** - In terms of the Marine Farming Planning Act?

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, we are focusing first on the white paper for the Living Marine Resources Management Act. We will be commencing a review of the other act in parallel, but we will start that as an internal review and go from there.

**Ms LOVELL** - You said later this year; can you be any more specific on that time line for the white paper?

**Ms PALMER** - No, I think that is it.

**CHAIR** - I hope you are not right on Christmas. On the salmon plan, there is a decision to move from partial cost recovery to recovering the full costs of monitoring the industry from 1 July this year, so very soon. I saw in the media there was a pushback from JBS about that. How are you dealing with that? Are we going to see our full cost recovery progressed regardless?

**Ms PALMER** - You can understand that the industry may push back. The reason we know that this plan is really balanced is because pretty much everybody is unhappy with it. The idea of the plan was to lay out a vision for the future of the industry. It gives clarity to the industry and certainty about how we, as a government, expect it to operate and growth

prospects that could be explored through rigorous plan processes. It aims to give community members confidence that their concerns have been heard, and that in response we are making it clear that we expect transparency. We want really good engagement. We want robust environmental performance.

I totally understand that some businesses are going to look at this plan and they could very well envision the worst-case scenario and the impacts on them. Some in the community are quite loudly giving feedback that the plan has not gone far enough. As I say, I think that we have the balance right here.

With regard to full cost recovery, this is something that has been a government policy for some time. It is not new. It has not just been launched at industry.

**CHAIR** - This is supposed to start 1 July. Will it start then regardless?

**Ms PALMER** - We have been working through a process with industry. It has been quite a detailed process. The secretary has been engaging directly with industry on that. It has been very clear to them that it will be going to full cost recovery. That will be happening on 1 July. I can tell you that the industry currently pays annual environment and planning levies in the order of \$2.5 million per annum, together with other transaction fees. I can advise that when full cost recovery is applied, that levy amount is likely to more than double.

The particulars of this have all been worked out now between the department and with those major industry players. The plan is the plan. This is the policy that our Government has set out. We want it to be fair to all sides.

**CHAIR** - What do you mean when you say the particulars are being worked out with industry, when we have three weeks or less to have particulars worked out. What are the 'particulars'?

**Ms WILSON** - Under the Living Marine Resource Management Act, there is a specific requirement that before a levy is put in place, that there is consultation with the fisheries body. In this case, also because it is introducing a full cost recovery, we have had partial cost recovery so it is a shift, engagement with the fishing body and industry is appropriate. Essentially, we are putting up the cost of management to cover the services which provide a benefit to the salmon industry in Tasmania, where it is solely for the salmon industry. Where it results in a cost burden for the Government, which arises principally because of the salmon industries in Tasmania. It is essentially about saying this is the proposal for cost recovery.

**CHAIR** - You can confidently say that all finfish farmers, growers, will pay full cost recovery fees from 1 July?

**Ms PALMER** - That is the Government's policy. It has been clearly laid out.

**CHAIR** - I understand the policy - what about the implementation?

**Ms PALMER** - It is clearly laid out in the plan. I am advised that we are absolutely on target in that consultation to see that implemented on 1 July.

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**CHAIR** - As the consumers, how will we know that this is occurring after 1 July? Ask a question?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, you could ask a question. I haven't thought to that stage. Letting you know, I just know that that's the plan, 1 July. This is when we will be seeing full cost recovery. Perhaps you might like to ask me a question on the Floor.

**Ms WILSON** - We've identified and said in the past what the levies are. The levy has been made. It's a matter of public record.

**CHAIR** - This is the thing I'm not sure about, what the particulars are. If the levy has been clearly laid out, the industry players know what they're up for. Why are we having this pushback now when they would have known for some time?

**Ms PALMER** - Why there's pushback is a matter for them. You would have to ask them why they are wanting to push back. That's fine. They are well within their rights to ask questions in this space and that's what we have been working through. It's now coming to a conclusion. You need to be respectful in this space. They know what the government policy is; they've had questions about it. We're answering those questions. Everyone is moving towards 1 July.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, you've said that you'll be recovering more from the industry - and with greater returns to the community. Are you able to talk us through how that part will work? What are the returns to the community? How will they be distributed? How does that part of the process work?

**Ms PALMER** - It's two different bodies of work. Cost recovery is what we've been talking about. That's 1 July. Return to community is a separate body of work. We have started preliminary work on that, looking at other jurisdictions, how does this happen in other places around the world. That work is yet to come to fruition. We'll be working through that.

Our priority was to throw our resources at full-cost recovery and then we will continue with our work for the return to the community. It is quite a different concept to cost recovery. We know that it's undertaken in other sectors and in jurisdictions who manage aquaculture. That's where we're working to.

**Ms LOVELL** - Do you have a time line for that?

**Ms PALMER** - In the action implementation of the salmon plan, the timing that we've put there is a near term project. Near term means between three months and two years.

**CHAIR** - Community engagement forums were held around Tasmania to enable community members and organisations to engage regularly and consistently in salmon planning and broader aquaculture and marine resource management. According to the document, it says these forums will ensure there is at least one engagement annually between communities in northern, southern and western Tasmania. In that consultation, have any issues been raised in relation to excluding particular areas from future finfish farming?

**Ms WILSON** - Ian and I chaired all of those sessions. It's fair to say that we got a range of opinions across different areas. There were definitely some advocating about inshore,

offshore. Some people were particularly saying that they were advocating that they were not interested in having aquaculture in a particular area. We took that into account in the advice for the minister about the salmon plan in the balanced approach that we are taking. There were definitely views. I would note that we also had submissions and took into a comprehensive consultation process and various views were put forward through that process which informed our advice to the minister.

**CHAIR** - Minister, how many areas have been identified as not being suitable in terms of the water area they're in or the temperature of the water, the proximity to sensitive fish nurseries and that sort of thing?

**Ms WILSON** - So, minister, there are two things that save the Salmon Plan under priority outcome 1 - Sustainable industry on page 10, outlines the Government's policy around existing and our future.

In terms of existing farms, it indicates and existing statutory processes plans and rights will be honoured. It recognises that the significant public interest in inshore farming areas and will continue to use statutory processes and policies incentive to promote effective use of marine resources.

In terms of new farms and further offshore farming, before the establishment of any new marine farming zone, planning proposals would be considered for planning process which includes Environmental Impact Statements. It also outlines that the Government looking at proposals for offshore and outside of existing marine farming areas, looks to mitigate and minimise over that with incompatible cultural and environmental social and commercial uses, located away from reefs, including rocky shoreline and further away from land.

So, the plan sets the framework for existing and future. A particular initiative that is in the plan, in particular is through progression of Statutory Planning Processes for relevant marine farming development plans across the state. They'll be a review to remove fin fish farming from zones where the area is not subject to an existing marine farming lease. We are going to commence with the Furneaux Islands Marine Farming Development Plan.

To take you through that again, this is a planning process to remove fin fish and the intent is to put forward through that proposal, which will be subject to consultation, fin fish farming from zones where the area is not subject to an existing marine farming lease, commencing with the Furneaux Islands.

In terms of the question around suitability. There is an extensive planning process that is already in place under the Marine Farming Planning Act, in terms of the development of salmon plants which includes an environmental impact statement. That process is robust and considers the factors that you have outlined.

**CHAIR** - Including the impacts of climate change?

**Ms WILSON** - In terms of an environmental impact statement, that would be and could be one of the factors that would be onshore [inaudible].

**Dr DUTTON** - There is work by IMAS on climate.

**CHAIR** - I mean, particularly as we know the impacts of climate change are very real and we are seeing rising sea temperatures in many parts. We are seeing different fish in our waters in the north that have not normally been there. How is that assessed in terms of assessing the planning process, if you like?

**Dr DUTTON** - Climate is fundamental in everything that we do in our planning and our management of the fisheries and Agriculture Tasmania. We have a long-standing partnership with both IMAS and CSIRO. There's actually a series of really useful work that's come out of the Big Fisheries Research and Development Corporation guidance on climate adaptation. That is factored into a series of scenarios we've already done. We did a preliminary analysis about 18 months ago with CSIRO where we looked at the fin fish [inaudible] around Tasmania. We identified certain areas. You'll note that the only area for example, in the plan that identifies growth opportunity is around Storm Bay where we think that's the major climate opportunity for offshore fin fish farming in Tasmania currently.

There is a lot of work under way around, not just the ability of fish to survive in a warmer [inaudible] but also the genetics that underpin agriculture that may enable us to have more temperature - we have some of the most temperature tolerant salmon in the world in Tasmania.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Minister, given that Tasmania has the highest proportion of boat owners of any state in the country, recreational fishing is estimated to be worth \$270 million of our gross state product annually and support 2500 jobs around the state, can you tell us what is being done to make recreation sea fishing more accessible?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you for your question, and your obvious interest in the recreational fishing sector. This Government has been funding a range of initiatives to support recreational fishing across Tasmania, from the deployment of four fish aggregation devices off the east coast to rolling out the Flathead for the Future program and supporting our Fishcare volunteers. It was great to meet some of our Fishcare volunteers at Agfest; they're a very enthusiastic group of people who really do an outstanding job.

We are also delivering a \$2 million Better Fishing fund announced in the 2021-22 budget. This grant program provides opportunities for community groups, fishing clubs, schools, councils and individuals to upgrade or build new recreational fishing facilities such as pontoons, jetties, fish-cleaning tables, toilets near fishing facilities, and steps and walkways.

The program has already delivered great outcomes for Tasmanian communities, such as improvements to the lighting and water supply and cleaning tables at the Bellerive pier and Narracoopa jetty, improved radio communications for people fishing at Eaglehawk Neck, improved access for fishers through the installation of a new floating fishing pontoon at Shipwrights Point, and installation of a new fish-cleaning station at York Cove in George Town.

We have also funded new equipment for the Swansea Primary School's sustainable fishing program, and the Reclink fishing program to support social inclusion.

I recently approved funding for a second round of projects, which will support St Helens Marine Rescue to install a real-time camera webcam for fishers to check weather conditions,

the West Coast Council to install two fish-cleaning stations at Macquarie Heads, and George Town Council to install fishing facilities at the Low Head breakwater.

The next round of Better Fishing grants is now open, and will close on 30 June. Funding will be available for both large projects up to \$150 000, and small projects up to \$15 000. I encourage recreational fishers to engage with their local councils, community groups and fishing clubs to consider lodging an application, so we can continue to support enhanced shore-based fishing infrastructure for our fishers in regional areas across the state.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Minister, the Maugean skate is a very rare marine animal that has been described as the thylacine of the sea, and by scientists as the canary in the coalmine. Even back in 2013, Dr Neville Barrett from IMAS did some work in this space, but there do seem to be conflicting opinions about it.

The West Coast Recreation Association has been taking keen interest in this, as its focus is all about maintaining traditional and recreational activities in its local area. As a result, I'd welcome the Government's response to the following two questions.

Given the concerns of community members relating to the impact closures of Macquarie Harbour would have on the west coast community, and in view of the comprehensive Maugean skate management protection proposal that encompasses recreational netting, will the minister give an undertaking that the IMAS netting and catch composition for the years 2013 to 2022, inclusive, be provided to the committee?

Secondly, with the growing concern about the marine environment in Macquarie Harbour and the role of the Maugean skate as an indicator species, can the IMAS netting and catch composition data that I understand has not been publicly available since 2019 now be made available, with interpretation if necessary, to better inform our understanding of what may be occurring? Can the recovery strategy be reassessed in conjunction with the WCRA community proposal for a sustainable [inaudible] recreation netting? I am happy to forward these to you, because they are a bit long.

There is another perspective as well. We have all received letters from the honourable Tanya Plibersek, Minister for Environment and Water, and from a variety of different entities and well-resourced environmental groups.

The three questions there were with a specific request of the Tasmanian Government to:

- (1) work with Hydro Tasmania to adjust river flows, particularly from the Gordon River, to maximise dissolved oxygen recovery and minimise the risk of low oxygen events;
- (2) immediately commence development of a comprehensive recovery plan to give the Maugean skate the best chance of long-term survival; and
- (3) there does seem to be a natural difference of opinions and a possible conflict with the interest of the finfishers' industry operations in Macquarie Harbour. How does the Government plan to resolve this dilemma and what resource are you intending to allocate to this problem?

I was interested that back in 2013 the IMAS's Dr Neville Barrett said:

We are aware that the harbour isn't - as some people perceive it - a highly impacted estuary from the mining activities. However, the area is a site of finfish farm expansion and pressure from recreational fishing.

So back then IMAS identified that there was pressure from salmon farming as well.

**Ms PALMER** - There are a lot of complicated questions there. Primarily, I need to say that this is a matter for the Environment minister, Mr Jaensch, as it comes under his portfolio. What I can say from my perspective as Primary Industries minister where it intersects with fishing. There were those interim management actions to restrict recreational gill-netting activities in Macquarie Harbour. That action was taken in response to the identified risks to the critically endangered Maugean skate. Again, that was a situation where a decision had to be made and we did work with west coast fishers to find a way that we could pull a lever to put in place some strategies for protection of the skate whilst giving them some opportunity to continue in a limited way with how they fish.

That is my side of this; the other side of the Maugean skate and a lot of the questions that you are asking are actually for the Environment minister. I can tell you that actions taken to date include the EPA's determination on nitrogen outputs for the salmon industry in the harbour and the implementation of the gill-netting restrictions for recreational and commercial fishers, which is in my space and that happened late last year. I am also advised that expert technical working groups have now been formed and future conservation actions, including exploration of environmental remediation in Macquarie Harbour and off-site conservation management opportunities, will be considered in the development of a conservation action plan. That plan will set out coordinated and prioritised strategies for the recovery of the species and will be finalised later this year.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you, minister. My concern with this one is that it is my understanding the catch composition data for recreational fishers with the Maugean skate is minimal catch. It seems as though that argument is being used as a reason for the plan, when really the amount of catch the fishermen has in that area have very little impact on the skate population. It seems as though that it is to do more with the actual flow and the oxygen in the harbor. I would like to be able to see what the catch data from 2013 to 2022 is, which you would be basing this plan on. Would that be available?

**Ms PALMER** - The questions that are coming from that west coast association have been put into the submission process for the review of the scalefish. It's really good that they've done that.

I met with them in Queenstown and they stepped through with me the concerns that they have and I also undertook to take their concerns back to the department and that that would be looked at and considered in the process of reviewing the scalefish rules. That's only just closed. We're now going through the process of going through all those submissions in detail and we'll be able to respond when we've had the time to look at those submissions.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - My question again, that would that mean the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) netting and catch compositions after the years 2013 to 2022 would be made available? I will let you take that back to others.

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**Ms PALMER** - So, what you're asking for is data belonging to IMAS's data - it's not our data - with specific catch data. That would need to be released by IMAS.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - How does that work when there's data available from IMAS which the Government supports doing this work, I imagine, and they're basing their condition for the plan on the catch from recreational fishers. Yet that information is not available to see that that weighs up, that it makes sense?

**Ms PALMER** - I have fed back into the department the direct concerns that were relayed to me when I went to that meeting with a number of representatives, including some from west coast fishers. I have asked the department to consider what they are putting forward and that whole body of work is part of the review of the scalefish rules. The department has its information; we have the information that's been given by the west coast fishers; and all of that is taken into account and then the department will bring that advice to me as the minister.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thanks, minister, but I can see the frustration with the community down there when the data has not been made available about what catch and what impact that group and the catch have on the species. It seems as though they may be bearing the brunt of something else that is happening in the harbour with the skate.

**Ms WILSON** - An interim report was released by IMAS on 2 May 2023 which is publicly available. It has information about the Maugean skate population, status and monitoring. I'm not sure that it has all of the details that you have indicated today but that would be a matter for IMAS and capacity for the West Coast Recreational Fishers Association to directly contact IMAS about that.

Through the Conservation Action Management Plan, the Environment minister is considering the multi-faceted issues in this complex environmental space and looking at all the interactions. That's why it sits in the minister for Environment's space. As the minister said, the Conservation Action Management Plan is the appropriate mechanism to understand the best management actions for the skate in the harbour.

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

**Mr GAFFNEY** - On that, can I forward some of the other questions we didn't get answered?

**CHAIR** - No, not without permission from the minister.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Minister, can I forward my other questions to you so that they can be looked at by your staff?

**CHAIR** - You need to read them out so that the minister knows what she is agreeing to.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I did read them all out.

**Ms PALMER** - These are the same questions you -

**CHAIR** - Not any new ones?



**Mr GAFFNEY** - The five questions I read out, including Tanya Plibersek.

**Ms PALMER** - The problem we have is that some of them are not for me so I can't accept that because they're not in my Output. They're for the minister for the Environment and I can't accept that on behalf of another minister, it is outside of the Output. That is the advice that I'm being given.

**CHAIR** - I don't know what time Committee B are doing environment. Maybe you could flick those ones through.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, and they'll probably get the same response.

**CHAIR** - If they're under that portfolio -

**Ms PALMER** - It is under the minister for Environment?

**CHAIR** - Maybe just send them through to Committee B. I don't know what time they're doing Environment.

**Committee suspended from 11 a.m. to 11.15 a.m.**

### **Output Group 3 - Biosecurity**

#### **3.1 Biosecurity and Product Integrity**

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, could I introduce Rae Burrows, General Manager of Biosecurity Tasmania.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, I wanted to go to the small hive beetle incursion. If you could talk through for the committee the process of when the first incursion was detected and what happened from that date on in terms of hive inspections.

**Ms PALMER** - Tasmania really does have a world-class biosecurity system and it has never been better equipped to protect our state's health, industry and unique environment from pests and diseases. This has been achieved through legislative change, with the passing of the Biosecurity Act 2019 and funding initiatives, including securing our borders. The recent detection of small hive beetle I will refer this to Ms Burrows, who was led our response team to the first detection of the small hive beetle.

**Ms BURROWS** - The detection of the first small hive beetle in East Devonport was in early March. I have not the exact date in front of me. It was found in a guard hive. I am not sure whether you are aware, but Tasmania has a set of surveillance hives around the whole state. Some of them are paid for by the Commonwealth, and they are called surveillance hives, and some of them are paid by the Tasmanian Government, which are guard hives. This particular small hive beetle was found in a guard hive quite close to the East Devonport TT Line Terminal. As soon as that happened and was confirmed as a small hive beetle, we put in place a 15-kilometre biosecurity risk management area.

We started checking every single hive within that 15-kilometre area from that point. How we did it was we had a set of concentric zones, we started checking the hives in the 10-15

kilometre, five to 10, then zero to five. We were going really well. It was towards the end of April and we had not found any more small hive beetle. We thought, you beauty, this one has come on the ferry and jumped into a guard hive and we have missed a crisis. But we found another one about - probably 1.4 kilometres away from the first finding, and interestingly, probably about 500 metres away from the TT-Line Terminal, but on the other side of the first finding.

By then we had actually checked all the hives in that 10 kilometre, all the registered hives, all the recreational and commercial beehives. We started to check the bee colonies, the wild bee colonies. That is the point we are at now. We have reduced the biosecurity risk management zone to a 10-kilometre zone. We are now working with the community to find every single wild colony we possibly can. I am very proud to say my staff have doorknocked about more than 1000 houses in that particular zone, asking for people to keep their eyes open, do not approach. They have also worked with the schools in the local area and similar sorts of things. Wild bee colonies are now our focus. With those wild bee colonies, as you can appreciate, some of them are quite high up in the trees, or might be in people's walls or whatever. We have developed a PCR test so we can actually get a scraping and have a reasonable understanding of whether or not small hive beetle is there or not.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, can I just go back to early March the first beetle was detected in that guard hive and you said that from when it was confirmed there was a risk management area set up, then by the end of April there had been no more. All of them had been checked and no more found. But can I just get a bit more of an idea of that timeline between that first detection? The first detection to when it was confirmed, that timeline, then the establishment of that risk area. You mentioned there were concentric perimeters, when each of those had been checked by.

**Ms PALMER** - You certainly can. It was pretty phenomenal to watch our biosecurity team spring into action. Very quickly there was a command centre established, which I jumped straight in the car and raced up and had a look at it, which was absolutely superb. For the detailed aspects of that I will ask Ms Burrows.

**Ms BURROWS** - The formal confirmation of the small hive beetle took three days. The PCR test unfortunately, as you are probably aware, does take a little time. But we were 90 per cent sure it was a small hive beetle. They are a fairly distinctive beastie. Entomologists were quite sure, but the confirmation came three days later. But by then we had already set up the instrument management team. We set it up at our Stony Rise offices. We immediately had the whole team in place, operations planning, instrument controller and so forth. I am very pleased to say that there was sharing of resources across Parks, for example, and EPA. They came in and helped us.

As far as your question about when each of the zones was, the surveillance on each was completed, I have to say I do not know the exact date, but suffice it to say we had done all the hives in the 10 to zero kilometre before that second small hive beetle was found, which was the 2 May. We had done all of those.

**Ms LOVELL** - Do you know how many hives there were in that zone?

**Ms BURROWS** - I have the figures here. We have actually done 2637 inspections since the initial detection. We have done intense inspection of 777 hives. Even though there were

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probably only 128 registered beekeepers in that particular zone. As you could probably appreciate because of registration of bee keepers was a fairly recent requirement - November last year - we still have people who have not registered. We only had 100 people registered, now 128.

**CHAIR** - Is that across the state or in that zone?

**Ms BORROWS** - Just in that zone.

**Ms LOVELL** - You had the 2637 inspections, 777 intense inspections, what is the trigger for an intense inspection.

**Ms BURROWS** - An intense inspection are on the high risk ones for example, if they were in close proximity physical proximity to the original hive where we found the small hive beetle. They would be subject to an intense inspection. In fact, the ones that were immediately adjacent we closed them up and put them in a freezer and actually hired a freezer van to actually take it from Stoney Rise to our enterology labs in Launceston.

The idea of freezing, obviously you close a hive, freeze it so you start to euthanise the bees because our entomologist needs to get in and actually have a really good look, pull it apart and that is what we are also doing with the wild colonies we can actually access. There is a limited number, same thing we close them up and that might mean spraying that magic- What is that thing called? I do not know, closing them up in some way shape or form and then putting them in a freezer, taking it back so our entomologist can take a good look at it.

That is intensive, we have deployed 466 traps within the hives. Most of the traps actually fit underneath the business end of the hives so you can actually take those traps out without opening the hives. That is a less intense.

**CHAIR** - So, how many bees would have died as a result of this?

**Ms LOVELL** - Do we know about the impact of this on the bee population in Tasmania would be?

**Ms BURROWS** - It is difficult to assess, we have not killed a whole lot of bees in the recreational and commercial hives we have checked to date. However, I will be upfront, we are having to euthanise the wild colonies, it is not easy otherwise.

**Ms LOVELL** - And is that within a radius? Is that the 15-10 kilometres?

**CHAIR** - Did you close them up during the day when a lot of the bees are out? Or during the night when they are all home?

**Ms BURROWS** - Because we were lucky in a lot of respects the weather was cooling down anyway, so the bee activity was actually reducing quite significantly. Yes, you are right. The closing up would happen when the bees were back into the hives at the early part of the season. But now as I say there mostly-

**CHAIR** - Inside their home anyway, too cold to go out.

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**Ms LOVELL** - Can be really devastating for bee keepers.

**Ms BURROWS** - If you look at what the impacts could be.

**CHAIR** - Yes, that is even more devastating.

**Ms LOVELL** - That is all I had on bees. I do have some other questions if you want me to keep going. Just in relation to Biosecurity officers at the airports, can you advise the committee how many vacancies there are across the airports at the moment?

**Ms WILSON** - As at March the vacancy level across Biosecurity Tasmania is set between 10 and 11 per cent which is what which we consider to be within the normal range of vacancies across the agency, particular in its tight labour market. I am not sure if we have the detail about vacancies at the airports.

**Ms BURROWS** - I do not have the exact information here, but I am aware of what our operations group is looking like at the moment. I apologise if my figures are not absolutely exact. We have full complement now. The last new recruit for our dog detector unit has been appointed, not actually started. That full complement is in place. We have possibly two or three biosecurity inspectors and as you would probably appreciate, biosecurity inspectors rotate. They don't just stay at the airport, they rotate through a range of other duties. There will definitely be a handful, and I'm not going to be more specific than that at this stage. If you want specific figures I can provide them.

**Ms WILSON** - I have some vacancies by band level as at March 2023 so I can provide that information but that would be across all of Biosecurity Tasmania.

**Ms LOVELL** - That's okay. We've heard that there's a full staffing profile now and fairly recently.

**Ms WILSON** - There's always staff turnover and it is always a point-in-time number.

**Ms LOVELL** - Is it still government policy or is it still a priority of the Government for each plane coming into Tasmania to be met with a handler and dog at the airports?

**Ms PALMER** - We have some good information on that and I will hand over to Ms Burrows.

**Ms BURROWS** - The Government, as you are probably aware, still has a policy of targeting 100 per cent of the flights coming into Hobart Airport and 90 per cent of the flights coming into Launceston Airport. Of course, now things have increased somewhat at the other airports and that's not through just dogs, that's all the Biosecurity inspectors.

Just for interest, because the flights into the various other airports have changed over time as well, from May 2022 to May 2023 the total number of flights coming into the state was 19 493; into Hobart 9428 and into Launceston 5183. Interestingly, the next highest is King Island, 1854.

**CHAIR** - Those golfers, and the mine workers now. That has really lifted it.

**Ms BURROWS** - Wynyard 1399, probably to King Island -

**CHAIR** - And ultimately to Melbourne.

**Ms BURROWS** - Devonport 1292; and Flinders Island 337. The number of those flights statewide that have been met by the dog handlers has been 10 215 or 52.4 per cent; the flights met by a Biosecurity inspector 37.9 per cent. As a total, we've met 90.3 per cent of all the flights coming in statewide.

**Ms LOVELL** - With an inspector and not necessarily a dog?

**Ms BURROWS** - With either/or.

**Ms LOVELL** - Do you have a breakdown of how many were met with a Biosecurity dog?

**Ms BURROWS** - I do. Would you like that for each airport?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, if you have it there, thank you.

**Ms BURROWS** - The flights coming into Hobart that have been met by the dog handlers, or the dog unit, is it okay if I just say a percentage?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes.

**Ms BURROWS** - Hobart, 63.4 per cent; into Launceston, 76.2 per cent; into Devonport, 16.7 per cent.

The minister has just made an announcement that we will get an additional handler in the north-west. That was one of our issues that we didn't have total coverage in the north-west so while that figure might seem quite small now it will be rectified soonish.

Wynyard, 5.4 per cent; and the two islands - at this stage, we don't have dog handlers on the islands. They will go there on a rotating basis but they're not there permanently.

Flights met by a Biosecurity inspector: in Hobart, 22.5 per cent; in Launceston 15.4 per cent; in Devonport, 82 per cent; in Wynyard, 92.4 per cent; King Island, 98.6 per cent; Flinders Island, 87.5 per cent.

**Ms LOVELL** - How many dogs are currently in service across the state?

**Ms BURROWS** - Fairly excitingly, we had 12 dogs about six months ago. They are all reaching their retirement age and we have just brought in another six bred-for-purpose dogs in a range of breeds including beagles, shorthaired pointers, Labradors and springer spaniels. They are being bred, as I say, as detector dogs. You may be aware our previous beagles came from refuge centres and weren't necessarily bred for purpose. They were very cute, but some came to us with some issues, so we've determined it's more efficient, effective and professional to go for bred-for-purpose dogs.

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Five of these dogs have now been training with handlers for the last four weeks or so. One of them seems a bit iffy. The contract we've arranged is that if the dogs don't actually meet the needs of the handlers and don't seem to be working out, we can get a swap dog, and we're at that point.

A number of our beagles are still working, and we have these five new dogs coming in. We'll get some more before the end of 2023, and the last of our 14 new dogs early next calendar year. We're in a phased process now.

**Ms LOVELL** - As the current dogs are retiring, they'll be replaced by the new dogs?

**Ms BURROW** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - What is the retirement age of a biosecurity dog?

**Ms BURROW** - It's about eight or nine.

**Ms LOVELL** - Okay, that's older than I expected.

**CHAIR** - Minister, in view of the time, you can take the next questions on notice.

**Ms PALMER** - I'll have a go.

**CHAIR** - Minister, you are also the minister for animal welfare, as I understand it. How many animal welfare checks in agricultural settings, including dairy, beef cattle, sheep and pigs, have been undertaken? The data can be broken down by species, if you like. Also, how many infringements or directions have been issued, and what do those matters relate to?

**Ms BURROW** - I'm not sure we have the information on inspections readily accessible. We can talk about how the system works, and our resourcing. In terms of Animal Welfare Act infringements, up to 31 May 2023, there were three infringements and 17 caution letters.

**CHAIR** - What do they relate to?

**Ms WILSON** - I don't believe I have that information.

**Ms BURROW** - Through you, minister, I do have that information. Some of them are still under investigation, so we are not able to divulge that sort of information.

**Ms WILSON** - Through you, minister, that's because infringements can be appealed, so perhaps we could leave it at that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Is this where the funding for the RSPCA also sits?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, some of it.

**CHAIR** - How does the RSPCA get its funding, then? It gets some from you, and where else?

**Ms PALMER** - The RSPCA has received over \$800 000 this year - \$550 000 for an inspectorate, which is core funding; \$28 500 to promote our animal welfare regulations;

\$50 000 for safety equipment and a vehicle for the inspectorate, which is new funding; and \$200 000 to support the new racing integrity model.

This funding will support access to an investigation management system for the RSPCA animal welfare officers to align with the Office of Racing Integrity and Biosecurity Tasmania; fund modernising the memorandum of understanding between the RSPCA and other relevant animal welfare regulators in Tasmania; an analysis of options for the lifetime tracking of greyhounds; improvement of adoption processes; augment linkages to local government areas.

I will seek some advice.

When I mentioned that some of the funding comes through me, that's an example of where that money is actually coming through, the Racing portfolio. That \$200 000.

**CHAIR** - That came through the Racing portfolio?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes. For the new racing integrity.

**CHAIR** - You provide the base funding?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes.

## **Output group 7 - Environment**

### **7.3 Natural values management**

**Ms PALMER** - I have some information that I wanted to table, which is in answer to some of the earlier questions. This is the breakdown of the gender numbers about the different positions. I will give that one to you. This is the information that we need to take out what was under Primary Industries. That's a new table that has that information there.

**CHAIR** - This might be coming but we can do that under another portfolio area.

**Ms PALMER** - The stream gauging sites. You asked for a breakdown for that. The river health monitoring sites. This is the information -

**CHAIR** - This is related to the Welcome River? Thank you.

**Ms LOVELL** - Just a clarifying question. The Voluntary Land Conservation Covenant. Is that under this line, or does this come under a different minister? It's something there's always been a bit of uncertainty about.

**Ms PALMER** - I'm pretty sure that's under Parks.

**Ms LOVELL** - Sorry. It's not you, that's all I need to know. That's fine.

**CHAIR** - I'm conscious of the time, but I understand the Natural Values reports, and I've had a look of some of it online, enable multiple data sets which can be incorporated in the Natural Values Report. A couple I want to mention is the raptor nest locations. How does this output group work with or assist volunteers, such as Adam Hardy of Raptor Care North West,

who collects and cares for injured raptors? How does your work in this output group interact with TasNetworks to help prevent raptor deaths?

**Ms PALMER** - I think that is one for the minister for the Environment, because it's an endangered species.

**CHAIR** - I thought yours was threatened species too, though.

**Ms PALMER** - Wildlife management and threatened species is Mr Jaensch.

**CHAIR** - Right.

**Ms PALMER** - Could I just seek some advice to make sure I am correct. Could I introduce to the table the General Manager, Environment, Jo Crisp?

**CHAIR** - In 7.3 that sits in your portfolio, minister, what do you actually cover?

**Ms PALMER** - Wildlife management.

**CHAIR** - But not threatened species?

**Ms PALMER** - That's the minister for Environment.

**CHAIR** - If there are raptors interacting with power lines and vehicles, you don't have any oversight over that?

**Ms PALMER** - No, I am advised that is Minister for Environment.

**CHAIR** - I thought that was under 7.4, Threatened species.

**Ms CRISP** - Threatened species is Mr Jaensch.

**CHAIR** - That is what I thought, yes. This is 7.3. If we then go to geodiversity sites, are they in this area?

**Ms PALMER** - Is there a question?

**CHAIR** - Where are the identified geodiversity sites? What qualifies as a site as geodiverse?

**Ms CRISP** - This is a question for the Environment portfolio and Mr Jaensch.

**CHAIR** - I do not know why it does not have 7.3 all up then. Prescribed burning advice - same? Unidentified biosecurity risk, that must be you. This is what it has outlined in the report. I looked at it online, on your website. What are the other biosecurity risks? I just cannot understand that this line item is for then, if everything in it seems to be Mr Jaensch's portfolio.

**Ms PALMER** - Mr Jaensch has protected sites under the Environment portfolio, which I think is what you are referring to in the questions. I will ask the deputy secretary to comment.



**Ms WILSON** - How about I start at the first principle, what the minister is responsible for.

**CHAIR** - The \$11.189 million appropriation here, what are - ?

**Ms WILSON** - Under the Nature Conservation Act and the regulations. But most of the portfolio responsibilities under the Nature Conservation Act sit with the Minister for Environment, except wildlife regulations, which cover things like property protection permits, deer, game management. If you look at the administrative arrangement order, I think it is section 78 in the regulations sit with this minister.

**CHAIR** - But the deer cull had nothing to do with this minister, either.

**Ms WILSON** - That is because it is in Parks. That is where that funding came through in the Australian Government funding. But if they needed any approvals, for example, they would have got those approvals from other parts of the agency. Have I missed any of the activities? Wildlife interactions, including seals.

**Ms CRISP** - And wildlife rehabilitation.

**CHAIR** - So wildlife rehabilitation, okay. Let us go back to Adam Hardy at Raptor Care North West; that is wildlife rehabilitation. He collects injured raptors and does it entirely as a volunteer. Is there any support available to someone like that? He does really important work around our state.

**Ms CRISP** - Yes, first of all I would just like to draw your attention to the support that the Government has provided to the sector through the strategy that was developed over the course of the last 12 months and released last year. There is a wildlife rehabilitation strategy and action plan, which identifies the priority areas for the sector to support and work with the various member groups and individuals. Through that strategy, the Government provided funding support. That funding support is \$115 000 over four years. Importantly, that has also led to a very strong partnership with WIRES. WIRES is -

**CHAIR** - They deal with those interactions with WIRES, not -

**Ms CRISP** - WIRES is the Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Services organisation originally based in New South Wales, but they have a national imprimatur and doing quite a lot of work in Tasmania. They have been funded through funding provided through the major bush fires on the mainland and they are doing some very good work. They have grant programs they provide to rehabilitators and they are being implemented in the state-

**CHAIR** - They can provide funding to people.

**Ms CRIP** - That is right they can and I am happy to provide some more information that can be provided to rehabilitators and people doing work in this area.

**CHAIR** - Okay, we are actually past our time but we will at least try and get to these last couple.

**Output Group 90 - COVID-19 Response and Recovery**  
**90.2 Seafood Industry Growth and Recovery**

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you chair, and minister I note there is no funding going forward. But it is worth making a point and you probably have some comments on the dual hits the seafood industry took around COVID -19 and the disruption to some major markets. Perhaps you could outline the support Government provided.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you very much for the question. The Wild Fisheries Action Plan is a \$2 million election commitment to support businesses in the wild caught seafood industry that have been affected by COVID-19 and other market disruptions. A key delivery under the fisheries action plan was the Seafood Processor Grants Program. After two successful rounds of this program 17 seafood processing businesses have installed new processing infrastructure, increased their value adding capabilities, provided further training for staff and developed new products. A total of \$1.2 million has been committed to these 17 sea food processing businesses through individual grants of up to \$80 000. Several projects are ongoing with all funds scheduled to be paid out and projects completed by the 30 of June 2023.

The projects funded includes support to purchase infrastructure to chill, freeze and maintain a product quality for a high grade premium frozen rock lobster product; support to develop self-stable ready to read Abalone product for supermarket retail; support in upgrading infrastructure to enable improved product quality and facilitate agri-tourism and support to purchase vacuum sealing machines, modified atmosphere packaging machines and branded packaging to develop value added products and access some new markets.

Importantly, rock lobster processes representing a majority of the state's rock lobster industry by value and volume signal that this timely Government support enabled them to continue servicing commercial fishers during ongoing market disruptions and avoid closing their doors for many weeks. With full live tanks resulting in further reductions in beach prices and more uncertainty for fishers and more pressure on local markets. Other seafood and processing businesses have detailed similar outcomes. The Wild Fisheries Action Plan has also delivered funding to the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council with \$100 000 over two years to deliver a maritime safety education program. This will support fishers to maintain compliance safety systems to provide seafood industry input into the Australian Maritime Safety Authority Tasmanian Regional Safety Committee and other consultation processes.

There was \$150 000 to continue the Eat More Seafood campaign covering a range of marketing activities to promote our wild caught seafood, including the involvement of high-profile chefs and rather popular presence at the 2023 Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

**CHAIR** - Sorry to interrupt you, we are running short of time as there is no budget allocation, you are just about finished.

**Ms PALMER** - In light of the success of the Wild Fisheries Action Plan this Government has committed a further \$250 000 a year over the next two years to this important initiative, thank you for the question.

**Grants and Subsidies**

**CHAIR** - We will move then I know we are out of time I just want to see, is there any questions on grants and subsidies?

### **Capital Investment**

On capital investment I do have one regarding the truck washes, are you happy if I send that to you on notice?

**Ms PALMER** - No, I will try and answer it now.

**CHAIR** - The truck washes as are a joint funded initiative with the Commonwealth government. Can you give information on which ones the funding relates to?

**Ms PALMER** - I'll pass to the deputy secretary.

**Ms WILSON** - The funding that is in the State Government Budget is for state projects. That has supported Powranna. The next one we're looking to fund in partnership with the Cradle Coast Authority, the Australian government, and the landowner, TasWater, is at Smithton. I believe you may be referring to a set of other projects that have been announced. That's fully federally funded.

**CHAIR** - The King Island one is fully federally funded?

**Ms WILSON** - Yes. We have provided advice to the Cradle Coast Authority into their project, but that is a project that sits with the Cradle Coast Authority.

### **Inland Fisheries**

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, I will introduce John Diggle to the table, who is the Director, Inland Fisheries Service.

**Mr DUIGAN** - This is the third year in a row I've asked this question, but the Tasmanian Carp Eradication Program, one of the pin-up programs across the world, John. I will ask for an update on where we are with this important project? How is it looking?

**Ms PALMER** - As you would know, European carp is an invasive species widespread on mainland Australia and it is a controlled fish under the Inland Fisheries Act 1995. The Carp Management Program commenced when carp were found in Lake Crescent in February of 1995 and in Lake Sorell soon after. The program has been extremely important for our environment and for our angling community. If it had been left unchecked in Tasmanian inland waters, carp could have had devastating consequences for our diverse array of native freshwater flora and fauna, some of course, which is actually endangered. It would also pose a major risk to our recreational angling industry and commercial fisheries which are significant to our economy.

The carp management program successfully eradicated carp from Lake Crescent in 2009 with the last specimen, having been caught in the lake in 2007. Over the last 28 years, approximately \$12.4 million of state Government funding and approximately \$2.8 million of federal funding has been contributed to the control program. Approximately 49 300 carp have been removed from the lakes over this time.

I am delighted to announce that I've been advised by IFS that there are no fertile male carp left in Lake Sorell. This has been verified through independent assessment by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies, IMAS. This comes on the back of targeted surveys of the lake since 2013, which failed to detect any juvenile carp, despite a series of years when there have been ideal environment conditions for spawning.

We will continue to be vigilant through a well-structured and coordinated monitoring program to confirm there is no recruitment. I am cautiously optimistic that with no reproductive population left in the lake, we'll be able to announce full eradication of carp from Tasmanian waters in the not-too-distant future. In addition to monitoring, I am also advised that IFS will undertake targeted education campaigns to prevent the reintroduction of this invasive species into Tasmania. I would have to take this opportunity to acknowledge the incredible dedication, the commitment and the work from Inland Fisheries that has gone into this. It is a tremendous outcome.

**Mr DUIGAN** - It hasn't been done anywhere else in the world, has it? As we were saying, Inland Fisheries, trout fishing is a favourite pastime for many Tasmanian. Can you provide an update on what the Government is doing to support this pastime?

**Ms PALMER** - As I say, some of the world's best wild brown trout fisheries and their lakes and waterways are enjoyed by thousands of Tasmanians and visitors. In recent years, as part of our plan to encourage more people to go trout fishing, we've built and upgraded amenities at population inland fishing locations, expanded our Anglers Access Program across high-priority waterways and supported angling events and clubs. Building on these successes, this Government is continuing to deliver. We are implementing a \$1 million election commitment with \$250 000 allocated each year over four years. This will enable to continue focus on improved access to anglers and on new and upgraded facilities.

The Inland Fisheries Service has been working in partnership with Anglers Alliance Tasmania and local angling clubs to deliver this commitment across priority lakes and rivers in the north-west and north-east Derwent catchments.

**CHAIR** - We need to call it quits there because we're well over time.

## **DIVISION 9**

(Premier and Cabinet)

### **Output Group 7**

#### **Community Partnerships and Priorities**

##### **7.6 Women's Policy**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, welcome back. Would you please introduce the people at the table and we will move on to the Women's Policy area in your portfolio.

**Ms PALMER** - I will introduce Jenny Gale, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Courtney Hurworth, Acting Deputy Secretary, Community Partnerships and

Priorities; and also joining us today is Brett Noble, Acting Director, Community Policy and Engagement.

**CHAIR** - Do you want to make an opening comment about the Women's portfolio?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you, Chair. In recognition of the deep history and the culture of this island, I'd like to begin by acknowledging and pay my respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the past and present custodians of the lands and the waters upon which we meet and gather. We pay respect to and we acknowledge the strength of Aboriginal women as the caregivers, nurturers, gatherers, cultural leaders and story-tellers for their wisdom to lead their families. I pay my deepest respects to elders past and present.

I'd also like to acknowledge the amazing women and men around this table who I get to work with every day and who I learn so much from. I know budget Estimates can be an adversarial process but it is an important one for holding government to account. Despite our different affiliations, I want to acknowledge that all of the women in this place are amazing representatives of their communities and wonderful role models for Tasmanian women and girls.

I also acknowledge our male colleagues, who are such great allies in our progress towards a truly gender-equal Tasmania.

I also congratulate the member for Murchison on her motion to establish a Joint Sessional Committee on Gender and Equality. I am very proud it was supported by the Rockliff Liberal Government. This committee is fundamental in establishing mechanisms for women. It demonstrates that genuine efforts are being made and we are already seeing some of those changes.

Chair, I also acknowledge and thank the former and current members of the Tasmanian Women's Council. The Tasmanian Women's Council has been instrumental in the development and delivery of so much of the work of the Women's portfolio over the last 12 months and for a number of years before that. I want to thank each member for their generous insights, their expertise and their ideas.

Chair, I'm also proud this year that we have an opportunity to talk about our new Equal means Equal: Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027. In many ways, our new strategy is a call to action and a reminder that whilst we have come a long way towards gender equality in Tasmania, we still have a way to go. The strategy reflects the voices, perspectives and priorities of Tasmanian women. Women shared with us that the priorities of our previous strategy - health, safety and wellbeing, leadership and participation and economic security - are still fundamental priorities for Tasmanian women. Equal means Equal reflects these priority areas but takes a step forward and strengthens our approach, as outlined in previous strategies. An important action in Equal means Equal is the delivery of our Gender Budget Snapshot and I anticipate the committee may have questions around this.

This year's snapshot is another step forward in our understanding of how government investment can support gender equality. Next year we will, for the first time, be implementing an end-to-end gender analysis of the budget and this will involve analysis of some policy and budget initiatives while in development as well as analysis of budget investments after the budget has been released.

The Tasmanian Government has been proud to invest over \$4 million since 2020-21 in initiatives to support gender equality in Tasmania. One such initiative is to share the stories of Tasmanian women from all walks of life. This year, for International Women's Day, we partnered with Brand Tasmania to develop a screen piece and stories about 17 Tasmanian women. We will be releasing more stories over the coming year so I ask that you think about the women in your lives and the networks who might be willing to share their own unique stories more broadly. Our work is not done until Tasmanian women are truly equal and this requires looking at the collective set of obstacles that affect women for no other reason than because they are women. I am confident our new strategy and the actions it supports will do this and lead to sustained change over the long term.

Chair, I look forward to questions in this portfolio.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I will go to Sarah first.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, could you provide an update on Women on Boards. We've talked about this over the last few years, so I'm interested in a comparison of those numbers from last year to this year.

**Ms PALMER** - The information I have here is, as of 31 March 2023, women held 46.4 per cent of positions on Tasmanian Government boards and committees, and 49 per cent of paid positions. So, of the 285 out of 580 that were paid positions, women held 49 per cent of those.

It is so important that we continue to strive for gender equality across all levels of society, and most crucially in positions of leadership and decision-making. We have made great progress in the representation of women on Tasmanian Government boards and committees. In June 2015, women only held 34 per cent of positions on boards and committees, so it is good to see that there has been that increase.

I think it's really important to stress that we are actually seeing 49 per cent of those positions paid through annual fees or sitting fees - as I said, 285 out of the 580 paid positions. This is a significant achievement that can be attributed to our Women on Boards strategy.

We are determined to continue working towards gender equity on our boards and committees. We are currently undertaking a review of actions and strategies to address the barriers to gender equality, and to further increase the numbers I've presented today.

For example, we are taking a fresh look at our Women on Boards strategy, and considering actions that could be strengthened to further propel achievement of that target. This strategy contains practical actions to support women to join Government boards and committees, and to support boards to increase their gender diversity.

**Ms LOVELL** - I appreciate it's very minor, but it looks like there has been a downward shift over previous years. A few years ago, it was 47.9 per cent, last year 47.2 per cent, and now we're down to 46.4 per cent, so I'm pleased to hear there's a review of that strategy in place. Where are you up to with that review? Is it just starting, or do you have any idea what it would include, or what might come out of that review?

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**Ms PALMER** - I'll pass to Ms Hurworth.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Through you, minister, I'd say we're about one-quarter of the way into looking at what we're doing. I want to be really clear that the review is going to look not only at what we need to do to help women to be skilled, to get onto boards - and perhaps this is a bit of a change in direction from what we've had before, but it's also going to look at the culture of boards themselves - practical things like meeting times, meeting locations, and also bias in the way boards make decisions. For the new Women's Leadership Scholarship program, we're looking at a stream to upskill boards to understand their own bias in how they think about the recruitment of people onto boards.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, do you have a breakdown of the number of women on boards? In previous years, we've had a breakdown of distinct individuals, if I can term it that way, just so we can make sure that we're not having the same woman on all the boards and that makes up your 50 per cent? Those numbers in previous years have been good, I might add.

**Ms PALMER** - Looking at women Tasmanian Government boards, there are 41 women and 51 men on more than one board.

**CHAIR** - Is it possible to get a breakdown of how many are on two boards, how many on three, how many on four? We have done in the past

**Ms PALMER** - We will get that information for you before the end of the session.

**Ms LOVELL** - Can I ask, it is 41 out of how many board members total?

**Ms PALMER** - There are 452 women on Government boards, 41 of that 452 are on one or more.

**CHAIR** - How many women are chair on boards or committees?

**Ms PALMER** - I have 33 women who are chairs and 73 men as chairs.

**CHAIR** - We still have a little way to go there. I want to go to the paid positions. Of the 49 per cent who are in paid positions, you said they included annual receiving fees. Sitting fees are obviously a lot less than the annual payment. Do you have a breakdown of how many of those receive annual payments and how many have received sitting fees?

**Ms PALMER** - I have both of those figures here. Member receiving annual fees, women 147, men 154. Members receiving sitting fees, women 140 and men 153. I also have unpaid, do you want that?

**CHAIR** - If you have unpaid.

**Ms PALMER** - Unpaid members, 160 women, 211 men.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, thank you, minister.

**Ms PALMER** - I have been given a list of actual names of women, the number of boards and the boards they are on. Information also for men on multiple Government boards and

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committees, again the name of the men and the number of boards, committees and the names of those committees. If anyone needs to take that.

**CHAIR** - Yes, that would be great.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - In your preamble you mentioned \$4 million for gender strategy or something. Can you go back to that comment you made there? You mentioned a figure, \$4 million for something towards the end of it.

**Ms PALMER** - We have invested over \$4 million since 2020-21 budget, in initiatives to support gender equality in Tasmania.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay, that is fine. Could you provide a breakdown of that \$4 million that you give to support gender equality in Tasmania? Could you provide that to the committee? Obviously not now, but you may be able to do that on notice.

**CHAIR** - What has been delivered under that \$4 million.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, how is that \$4 million being delivered?

**Ms PALMER** - What programs?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Yes, what programs.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, we do have that information. I will hand to Ms Hurworth.

**Ms HURWORTH** - What we have under this over \$4 million. Bear with me if I go slowly. It is \$400 000 ending in 2023-24, \$100 000 per annum for the Women's Leadership Scholarships Program; \$20 000 per annum ending in 2024-25 for the International Women's Day Small Grants Program; \$1 million for Supporting Women To Succeed women's workforce participation, \$2.5 million from 2020-21 for Supporting Women To Succeed women's workforce participation, \$400 000 to 2022-23 for the industry liaison officer role in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, \$75 000 for women in building and construction and \$25 000 for the Girls in Property pilot.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That is fine, and you called it the \$4 million - what did you call it, a gender or something?

**Ms PALMER** - In my comments I said the Tasmanian Government has been proud to invest over \$4 million since 2020-21 in initiatives to support gender equality in Tasmania.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Let's name it up: it's to support women becoming more equal, I suppose. It is a women's equality framework, I think, more so than a gender support. You know where I am coming from here and that is fine because I have no issues with that at all, but it will be interesting when I ask another question about what is included for men - and I understand your role as for Minister for Women.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, and I do know where you are coming from and I appreciate your comments, but I think when you look at the key indicators across so many aspects of society where we see the inequality, it is the fact where women are disadvantaged for no other reason



than that they are women. These initiatives, when we talk about gender equality, it is well established in the data across so many indicators that there is an imbalance, whether that is safety and wellbeing, certainly economically you only have to look at what is happening with superannuation and health outcomes. We know that the inequality there is that women are disadvantaged -

**Mr GAFFNEY** - In health outcomes?

**Ms PALMER** - In health outcomes, in wellbeing and safety, in economics and a number of those indicators are actually set out in the Gender Budget Snapshot.

**CHAIR** - Minister, I note the output group here drops away quite significantly in the funding over the years; I know part of that is related to the development of the Equal means Equal strategy that you have referred to. I am just concerned that drops away from \$659 000 this year to \$310 000 next year, and the next out-year is only \$191 000. I am just interested in how you are going to meet the ongoing work that will be needed to get to a position of gender equality with such little funding.

**Ms PALMER** - Look, the Tasmanian Women's Strategy commits to an evaluation of the strategy and the impact of investment and initiatives on Tasmanian women's lives in Equal means Equal. The results of this evolution are due in 2026 and will inform funding initiatives in future strategies across the women's portfolio. We are deeply committed to equality for women, which is why we are taking an evidence-informed approach to investment and policy design. We do not want to assume that what we have always done we'll just keep doing, so there is a body of work that I will get Ms Hurworth to -

**CHAIR** - It will help me understand what is going to be done in the coming budget year we are looking at with the \$660 000 basically - what will be done with that appropriation?

**Ms PALMER** - While we are getting the breakdown of that money, I think this is a fantastic opportunity to talk about some new work that is going to be done. From the funding allocation to deliver Equal means Equal, \$200 000 will be directed to the delivery of an evaluation framework.

This is to develop this evaluation framework for entering into a partnership with the University of Tasmania, the Institute of Social Change. Activities include developing publicly available domains and indicators, developing and collecting datasets, and measuring outcomes for women and girls against the focus areas of the Equal means Equal strategy, that being safety, health and wellbeing, economic security, and leadership and participation.

That partnership, which is with UTAS and ISC, the Institute for Social Change, includes the Department of Premier and Cabinet as the lead agency responsible for delivering Equal means Equal and the Department of State Growth as the agency responsible for delivering the population strategy 2.0. UTAS is strongly placed to provide and deliver the evaluation framework in partnership with our government with knowledge and access to information relating to social change, data capture, data analytics, statistics and communications. The indicators developed will assist in refining the indicators in the gender budget snapshot and the framework will enable a detailed evaluation of whether our investments and our initiatives are progressing gender equality in Tasmania.

We get incredible feedback about a lot of the strategies that have been in place for a number of years. We know that we feel good about them but it's taking it to that next level. It's getting that extra layer of information that says: Is there a real outcome when we know that women can see other women achieving? Should we be putting more money into the Tasmanian honour roll, the stories of Tasmanian women, or are there more outcomes when we're investing in getting women upskilled in leadership. Are there better outcomes for gender equality when we do that?

That's what we're looking at. We are trying to get that next level of information that will guide us in our budgeting to say, 'you know what? Here's where we're getting real bang-for-buck here'. We need to look at what other strategies we can have in that place. Or do we just need to better resource that strategy? What are the areas that might make us feel good, but are actually not really having an outcome in people's homes, in our schools, in our workplaces? We might need to rethink some of those.

I think this is an exceptionally important body of work to make sure that we are actually getting those real outcomes and it is actually changing our community and changing the lives of women. Rather than just going, 'this is a great strategy, it makes me feel really good', but we're not really sure if there's a change that happens outside of that particular strategy.

**CHAIR** - Can I go to the figures? You're singing the song about outcomes measures. That's really great to hear that some of the money - and sure we will be informed further - will develop the framework with the Institute of Social Change and UTAS to look at those, including how we're going to measure outcomes from this. I'm really pleased to hear that. You also said it will inform the gender budget snapshot. You also said in your opening comments about putting an end-to-end gender analysis over the budget, which I would call gender budgeting. It's a well-defined term and has been used in many jurisdictions.

I will be interested to hear further about how you intend to apply it to the gender budget snapshot for next year, and how we'll see the measures? This is like a starting point. It's much better than what we had last year, so I commend you for that.

**Ms PALMER** - Last year was the starting point.

**CHAIR** - I know.

**Ms PALMER** - Rung one on the ladder. We're on the ladder.

**CHAIR** - I don't disagree with you on that. But how do we see progress? How do we see outcomes measures reflected in this as well? It may be the work that's going to be done, but I'm interested in how it might look next year.

**Ms PALMER** - There are two questions before me at the moment. Would you like to address that question and then perhaps we'll go to the breakdown of the \$800 000?

**Ms HURWORTH** - With the gender budget snapshot, it's one-third of a three-part integrated approach. What we did this year when we say end-to-end as you would well know, you can look at policy design through a gender lens, and then you can assess decisions once they're made through a gender lens. What we did this year is that latter part. We assessed budget initiatives based on gender once the decision was made. There had been no system with

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gender lens applied to those decisions before they have entered into the budget process. From next year we will be using a gender impact assessment tool kit to inform the design of policy and spending initiatives before they even become decided, then we will be able to look at them on the other side for their gender impacts.

**CHAIR** - Are you using an already designed tool, or developing your own?

**Ms HURWORTH** - We took a tool based on the Victorian model and tested it with Homes Tasmania. We found it to be really difficult to apply and overly bureaucratic. Whilst it might have read to a gender impact assessment on paper, it did not change any of the attitudes of the people who were actually developing the policy. It did not address their own bias. They still thought that housing was a gender neutral topic. We have actually commissioned some expertise to help us. We have done a scan of the relevant ones across jurisdictions and internationally, to take the best from those, then make our own Tasmanian tool. The difference with ours and others will be they did include the case studies of how government policy has impacted actual people's lives, actual women's lives.

**CHAIR** - You will develop your own. I think she said you took some expert advice. Is that funded out of this money?

**Ms HURWORTH** - For 2022-23 we spent \$140 000 on the Gender Budget Snapshot, \$50 000 on the evaluation framework and \$50 000 on what we are describing as the tool kit, which is the assessment process, and \$65 000 on other activities such as communication, women's stories, projects, etcetera. Next year there will be no expenditure on the gender budget statement because Treasury will take the lead.

**CHAIR** - They will fund it under their own budget?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes, they will use their resources to do it. The evaluation framework will be 50 gender impact assessments, then that flows over the forward 50, then support activities. We also have \$700 000 in this year for women's workforce participation, \$100 000 for scholarships, \$20 000 for International Women's Day grants.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - We received a question from an organisation saying -

The process of providing a gender analysis budget requires analysis of all policy measures, not just those intended to support women. With a gender lens to reflect on how they may impact different communities based on gender.

How does the Government intend to progress the process of future gender analysis of budgets and other measures? How will gender equity be measured on an ongoing basis? Will targets be dealt to help measure progress across all policies, with a lens across the policy, no so much whether it is male or female?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much for the question. I am going to pass it to our acting deputy secretary.

**Ms HURWORTH** - This year's budget snapshot did not only look at measures targeted specifically towards women, it looked at a selection of initiatives in the budget. It

acknowledges it was not the full budget or end-to-end analysis. To do it properly and not in a tokenistic way, it is actually going to take some time to build capacity to do that across the whole budget. That is what the gender impact assessment process I was talking about earlier is doing in relation to targets. What I can add on a factual level without going to the Government's policy, is that no state and territory has targets at the moment. They have targets for number of State Emergency Service positions in the Public Service, for example, who are women which we also have, but they do not high-level targets to do with budget measures.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Thank you. There was some information here I thought was really good, minister, so that's fine. It is great there is a leadership process in place for young girls and women as they become leaders in the community. But I still think there is an inequity in that capacity for men to have a leadership program for young men to go down that same path with those same opportunities. In your role, what else do you believe needs to be done by government to correct that imbalance? I look on with envy when I see young school girls speaking about leadership opportunities in this place, and there is a budget for that. There are young men out there as who need that opportunity.

**CHAIR** - It is not a state Government budget funded item.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - I am saying that is what I saw. I thought there was a young lady's leadership program.

**CHAIR** - Not for the young women who come to parliament; that is a Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians project.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Okay.

**Ms PALMER** - I totally appreciate your comments but I am the Minister for Women - that is the portfolio. We are trying through this portfolio, as a Government, to address the inequities we have seen for many years with regard to men and women. My focus through this portfolio is on women. A really important thing to remember is we know communities prosper when there is that gender balance. We know that when women do well, men do well. But I have to be clear this is the portfolio for women and we are trying to address the issues we have had for generations around equality. I am not in any way trying to undermine where you are coming from - I totally accept that, but my focus and my job as the Minister for Women is to look at where are those imbalances; where is there that inequity; where is it that women are disadvantaged for no other reason than the fact they are a woman?

That is where my focus is - acknowledging that when women prosper, men prosper as well.

**CHAIR** - Under this role, as Minister for Women, in terms of your role broadly across the whole Public Service that sits under DPAC. The Head of the State Service sits here with you. In terms of promoting gender equality, we know that respect for women is an integral part of gender equality so what role do you have in this area in trying to promote respect for women across the whole of our state workforce?

**Ms PALMER** - I think I understand your question.

**CHAIR** - We know that respect sits at the base of this.

**Ms PALMER** - This Government is committed to a state service workforce that is diverse, including where women are equitably represented. In 2016, heads of agencies set a target of women holding at least 40 per cent of senior executive positions by 2020. This was achieved well ahead of that and women now occupy 51.5 per cent of senior executive roles of March 2023, and it's based on a paid headcount.

Under Safe Homes, Families and Communities agencies undertake a range of activities related to gender equality, diversity and respect and in October 2020, this Government committed to implementing the Our Watch: Workplace Equality and Respect Standard which will ensure workplace equality and respect continues to be prioritised.

The 2020 State Service survey saw a 2 per cent reduction of participating employees reporting that they had personally experienced workplace bullying in the 12 months prior to the survey. Although this reduction is positive, any level of workplace bullying and harassment always needs to be prioritised and addressed.

I also had an amazing opportunity where I was invited by the head of the State Service to participate in a webinar, with participants from right across the state service. It was a bit like being the guest speaker at a conference where I was only in the room with three other people; everyone was online. It was an opportunity where Ms Gale just asked questions and I was able to speak to the entire state service, or those who wanted to be involved in the webinar, just to talk about my journey, my experiences here in the Legislative Council, my experiences as a minister, as a mother, a working mother, as a partner and that was quite fantastic. Ms Gale was the other guest speaker so we were able to share our stories right across that sector. I am not sure if Ms Gale can remember the numbers who attended but we were a bit overwhelmed as we saw hundred, by hundred, by hundred, of people - 500 actually tuned in to that webinar.

**CHAIR** - So in terms of training or educationally, you talked about something after the hour watch framework, is it?

**Ms PALMER** - It is Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards.

**CHAIR** - Standards, that's right. Does that also involve training and awareness raising of those issues that sit below that standard?

**Ms GALE** - Yes, it does and it involves men and women, not just women. It is across the state service.

**CHAIR** - How many employees across the state service have undertaken the training?

**Ms GALE** - We would have to take that on notice. We are about to provide an annual report across the state service, which is not very far from being published. If you would like to wait -

**CHAIR** - Tell me about what is in the report. What can I expect in that report?

## PUBLIC

**Ms GALE** - Basically, it indicates what each agency is doing to address the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards in their agencies.

**CHAIR** - And that includes who has done, well not who by name but the numbers that have done training and a gender breakdown of that.

**Mr GALE** - It will not show tables of how many people have participated in training. It will indicate what kinds of training are being done, what programs there are and that kind of thing. As with the gender budget statement, this will be the first year which we have reported against the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards. We expect that the report will improve over time but it is not far from being released.

**CHAIR** - If it is not going to actually identify the number of people across the department who have undertaken the training - I would appreciate if you could do that - if that information is available a bit later, minister.

**Ms PALMER** - The advice that I am given is that we do not believe we are collecting that data at present.

**CHAIR** - Why wouldn't you? This is an important measure. I know this is an output, the number of people who have actually undertaken the training, but if you do not know how many people have undertaken it then you cannot measure outcomes from it.

**Ms PALMER** - We are not collecting that data in a systemic way.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Each agency has their own Workplace Equality and Respect Action Plan because there are significant differences in agencies in terms of culture, readiness, understanding, even the demographics of the workforce, education a very female-focused agency. Each agency is offering different training opportunities and different training packages based on their action plan which was based on an assessment against the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards. At this point in time, given where we are at with that, we are not collecting. Each agency will do data collection in different ways at this time, and differently based on what sort of training they are offering.

Some of the training might be almost anonymous, where you can attend without identifying that you are attending because of the nature of some of the content of it. We would not be able to provide a meaningful idea across the whole state service. We may be able to provide some indication for DPAC itself as an agency, but not state service wide at this time.

**CHAIR** - Do you require an indication of DPAC at least? Is there an expectation that each department will report in their annual report, what they are doing in this space?

**Ms GALE** - Through you, minister. It will be in the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards' annual report, not each agency's annual report.

**CHAIR** - That will be in an annual report that comes out at the same time as all other annual reports come out?

**Ms GALE** - I expect it will be at a different time. We almost have the first one ready to come out. We will not wait until October to do that. Then, as we mature, as I said, I am trying

to manage your expectations, as we get better at this, then we will put it out at the same time each year.

**CHAIR** - One hopes in the future, not in the first iteration necessarily, that there will be outcomes measures in that.

**Ms GALE** - Yes, we hope that there will be.

**CHAIR** - It all takes time. We have not done much of this for such a long time, it takes a while to turn the ship around. Are there questions on women's policies?

**Mr DUIGAN** - One question on women's policy, is about leadership. We have heard that women traditionally have been under-represented. The Government has made great strides in that space. There is a particular program called the I-LEAD Women in Industry program that you might like to make comment on.

**Ms PALMER** - This has been a great strategy designed specifically for women. The I- LEAD Women in Industry tackles the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions and creates recipes for career success in traditionally male-dominated industries. The training is delivered online and in person by expert facilitators and prominent sector professionals who share their tried and tested strategies in their career success. A total of 42 applications were received in the 2022 I-LEAD scholarship funding round, with 37 selected to participate.

We will be evaluating the success of this investment, but for now I would like to share the testimonies of some of these women. Elysha said:

The I-LEAD Women in Industry Program helped me identify opportunities for improvement and provided me with several interesting learnings about myself. It was incredibly well run and varied and I would highly recommend this program to any leader or potential leader.

From Melanie:

I learned adaptive management techniques to strengthen my work and leadership style, and I formed connections with amazing women. This builds on my experience in other types of adaptive management, such as conservation action planning, and added many new skills.

And from Tammy:

I joined I-LEAD Women in Industry with an expectation of gaining insight into my personal strengths and how to leverage on these to drive change within industry. I have left with so much more than I could have anticipated. I now have a box of new tools to draw upon to assist in challenging situations, along with a network of inspirational female leaders who I can reach out to and I know will understand my experiences. I now know I am not alone on my journey to drive inclusivity, equal opportunity and better conditions in industry. I recommend I-LEAD Women in Industry to all females working in traditionally male-dominated industries, or your role within the industry.

## PUBLIC

Leadership is a group action not a title. Break the shackles and realise your potential.

I think that in the words of those women, I could not have said it better.

**CHAIR** - All done? Okay, well that has run us a couple of minutes over our scheduled break. We will finish off with Women and we will come back at 1.45 p.m. under Minister for Disability Services.

**Committee suspended from 12.50 p.m. to 1.45 p.m.**

### **Output Group 7 - Community Partnerships and Priorities**

#### **7.1 Disability Services**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back minister for your Minister for Disability Services Portfolio. I invite you to introduce members of your team at the table and then make an opening statement if you wish.

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, your indulgence, just before I do that, in relation to our last session, there was a question on family violence training in DPAC. I do have answer for you now I would like to put on the record. Of 628 staff, 532 have completed the training this year. That figure is to the end of March. That works out that 85 per cent have done that training.

**CHAIR** - You don't have a general breakdown for that, if you haven't that is fine?

**Ms PALMER** - Not at this stage, no.

**CHAIR** - See if you can get it. I did mention [1.48.19 inaudible]. Thanks minister.

**Ms PALMER** - If I could introduce my team at the table. Ms Jenny Gale, Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Ingrid Ganley who is the Director of Community and Disability Services. Also, Courtney Hurworth, the Acting Deputy Secretary Community Partnerships and Priorities.

Thank you Chair for the opportunity to make some opening comments. As Minister for Disability Services, I am delighted to see the inquiry that began in this Chamber two years ago, the Legislative Council Committee Government Administration B into Disability Services in Tasmania, is now forming part of a national overhaul of how disability services are delivered in Australia. In Tasmania, it is estimated that there are more than \$140 000 living with disability, the highest of any state and territory. The Legislative Council report on services in this state recommended the state Government work with the NDIS to ensure the needs of these Tasmanians are met by addressing deficiencies in service provision and workforce.

My fellow Legislative Councillors know my personal connection to the Disability Services portfolio and would understand why I feel proud and privileged to be part of the work that improves the experiences and the opportunities for those living with disabilities. Our Government is also truly committed to supporting these Tasmanians. Before the National Disability Insurance Scheme was introduced, there were approximately 3000 Tasmanians



accessing specialist disability services. There are now over 13 000 Tasmanians living with disability on the NDIS. In 2023, Tasmania will contribute \$285 million to the national scheme.

You may be aware that Bill Shorten, the federal minister for the NDIS, formally announced a review into the NDIS on 18 October 2022. Our Tasmanian Government welcomes this review.

We are making sure the voices of Tasmanians with disability are heard. In fact, the Legislative Council inquiry findings were submitted to that national review. Our bilateral governance arrangements allow me, as minister, to provide policy advice on matters relating to the NDIS through the Disability Reform Ministerial Council. This role is now more important than ever.

The review is looking at the design, operations and sustainability of the scheme, as well as ways to make the market and workforce more responsive, supportive and sustainable. We note the progress of the review so far, and will continue to work closely with the independent review panel and our Tasmanian stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for Tasmanians living with disability.

It is really pleasing to see the review panel engaging with Tasmanian stakeholders through this process. I encourage anyone with an interest in this work to participate in the NDIS Review: Have Your Say process, which can be found on the NDIS website.

Of particular interest for Tasmania - and the members of the Legislative Council committee who two years ago highlighted the concern - is the longstanding issue of thin markets and resulting service gaps for Tasmanian NDIS participants. I certainly hope to see progress on this issue, and better outcomes for Tasmanians living with disability.

Thank you, Chair. I will now take questions on this portfolio.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I'll start with some of your opening comments. The Productivity Commission data shows a significant decline in disability service investment occurring in all states and territories. Research also shows that NDIS tier-two supports, originally designed to provide a robust community-based support system, are failing people living with disability who are not eligible for a funded NDIS package. In the absence of adequate tier-two supports, people with disability are at greater risk of being excluded from society and capacity-building opportunities, and are therefore more likely to need more direct support under tier-three services in the future.

Given that the independent review of the NDIS findings and recommendations will not be known for some time, and there is currently no allocation in the Tasmanian budget, how does the Tasmanian Government plan to address the increasing level of unmet need for Tasmanians living with disability who are not eligible for a funded NDIS package?

**Ms PALMER** - Prior to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Tasmanian Government funded specialist disability services to approximately 3500 Tasmanians living with disability. As I mentioned in my opening comments, there are now 13 049 active participants receiving support through the NDIS, of whom 8657 had not previously received disability support from the government program.

We know the introduction of the NDIS has had a really significant impact on people with disability here in our state. This growth in support for people living with disability in Tasmania is a significant achievement, and it has resulted in improved outcomes for many participants and their families and carers right across the state.

As I also mentioned, through the NDIS, which is where we see Tasmanians with the most severe level of disability supported, we will contribute \$285 million in 2023. We will also invest in other services such as children's therapy services, autism diagnostic services, advocacy services and the continuity of support services for people with disability who are not eligible for the NDIS.

At a national level, the Tasmanian Government is a signatory to Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, and remains committed to a united national approach to supporting people with disability, to maximise their potential and ability to participate as equal citizens in our society.

Collaboration across all levels of government is required to respond to meet the challenging needs of all Tasmanians with disability, including those who are not eligible for the NDIS. I acknowledge the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee B Inquiry into Disability Services in Tasmania, which commenced in 2020, with the final report provided on 31 May 2022.

Of the 18 recommendations made by the committee, seven were wholly supported by the Tasmanian Government, nine were supported in principle, and two were not supported in response provided to the Legislative Council in September 2022. We are well aware that there are people who are not on the NDIS and are not covered through that enormous contribution that the state makes, but we also invest in other areas for people with disability, not necessarily through this portfolio of Disability Services, but in the services that we provide in other portfolios across the Government.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Do you have any concerns about the future of some of those organisations that aren't funded through the NDIS that provide support in this tier 2 space?

**Ms PALMER** - I'm not quite sure how that relates to the Budget. It seems a very general question. Can you give me specifics?

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Well, we've got a general line item. There's obviously a number of services - and I'm not being adversarial about this. I mean, we all know about Aurora Disability Services - all those sorts of organisations that are struggling for funding because of the way the NDIS has been set up. It's all being reviewed now. Are you concerned at all about the future of those services that are probably doing a lot of heavy lifting without what we could argue is enough support?

**Ms PALMER** - I think one of the things that's been identified and is forming a part of this national review into the NDIS is that we know when services in Tasmania went from being funded here in Tasmania and moved into the new NDIS framework, that there were issues particularly around core funding. What was set up through the NDIS was of course the ILC opportunity for funding. That was very project-based and we had instances where certain NDIS providers came to me and it was a matter of them almost having to adjust their service to try to fit a funding model in order for them to access funds, which wasn't ideal. How the ILC is set

up is forming part of that review, because we've been able to feed back through that national disability services ministers' forum that we have providers who need more flexibility and the ILC wasn't offering that sort of flexibility.

This was at times causing quite an amount of angst and stress and also leaving states in a difficult position where we're providing so much money through the NDIS and then we have service providers that are special to us in Tasmania that were struggling with that new way of being funded. Part of that review and part of what my advocacy has been is that this model of ILC funding has not really worked. That is now forming part of that review to have a look at that, to see if there can be a bit more flexibility in that space. I think that will be important to go to what you're talking about, which is some of these smaller organisations that may need a bit of assistance with their core funding.

I can say that through ILC we have some great examples where it's been incredibly beneficial for some of our providers. Since 2018, Tasmanian providers have been funded to undertake 33 ILC projects, which has been nearly \$18 million, but there is actually - I think it was Tas Amputees. I know I've got that information with Tas Amputees. I believe that prior to this, they were funded \$4000 through their core funding. Once they were able to access money with the ILC, it was quite amazing. They received two Information, Linkages and Capacity Building grants which totalled \$183 040 since 2018 to further its peer support program. There have been examples where it has worked exceptionally, but I absolutely acknowledge, as do other state and territory ministers, there needs to be a little bit of flexibility in how that money is distributed or applied for.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Given the changes in disability with the original rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the way that was adapted to by state governments, not just Tasmania, and now the review that's coming, do we need to look at an overhaul of our disability strategy in this state?

**Ms PALMER** - I am not sure we need to have an overhaul of the disability strategy at this point. This body of work that's been done is pretty intense. Minister Shorten has put some pretty tough timelines on the delivery of this review and what his expectations are. One of the most important things we need to do and I'm certainly playing my part on behalf of Tasmania, is to ensure that we have a really sustainable NDIS into the future. Just from the examples I have given you about how from looking after 3000 Tasmanians, to now looking after 13 000 Tasmanians, where this scheme works it's superb and where it hasn't been working it has been really difficult. It is growing at such a rate and we have to find a way for that to be sustainable. When I talk about sustainability, I am not talking about impacts on people with disability. There has been a little bit of fear in the community that is what this review is about. It is looking at things like the criminal aspect to the NDIS. There has been fraudulent activity. That is where need to clamp down on.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Just to be clear, I am not asking about that.

**Ms PALMER** - And where we need to make sure this is a really sustainable scheme into the future.

The Accessible Island: Tasmania Disability Framework for Action 2018-2021 was Tasmania's implementation plan for the National Disability Services and a final report on Accessible Island will be published shortly. This report will help to inform the development

of our next plan. To deliver the new plan, the Government will consult extensively across the community and sector as well as through the Premier's Disability Advisory Council and the Minister's Disability Consultative Group. Looking for the Tasmanian Government, we will be looking to refresh Accessible Island which we do with all of our plans to ensure it is contemporary and that is aligned with both the Alcohol and Drug Services and the Disability Services Australia Review.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Will you be looking at doing that after the work's done at a federal level?

**Ms PALMER** - It needs to be happening at the same time, but it will be important for us to take a look at as there are really big things happening in the disability area we are going to have to take into account and make sure what we are looking at doing and the plans we have are going to be responsive to the review and also responsive to other bodies of work we know are coming.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Two different questions. If an individual came into my electorate office and I acknowledge that not all disabilities are visual, and they have an issue where they are not eligible, who do I contact or what do I do in Tasmania about that individual?

**Ms PALMER** - You are saying they are not eligible for an NDIS plan?

**Mr GAFFNEY** - They have been knocked back and they come into the office and say - 'This is my situation', what do I do?

**Ms PALMER** - My instinctive reaction is to say - get them to call me, you have my number, and I would always try to do that because we have, obviously, through the department access to all sorts of information. I will pass to Ms Ganley.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It has happened and I would like know what I can do practically.

**Ms GANLEY** - Within Tasmania, as part of the NDIS, there is the local area coordination which is one of the two services that is being discussed. Part of their role is to act as a coordination point, not just for people to access the NDIS, but to access services and support outside the NDIS. Baptcare and Mission are the Tasmanian providers. They would be the place I would point people to, to make that contact.

There is also the Disability Gateway which has been set up by the Australian government. That is for anyone to access. That is again a whole-of-government approach around how to connect people to the right services. They are the two key points.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - That is terrific, thank you very much. My second question is something that may not be part of your portfolio. Given some of the people on the north-west coast attend both the special schools and have disabilities, what interaction or conversation do you have with the Education minister about the proposal to co-locate the support schools into Penguin? I am interested in the relationship that you have with Mr Jaensch about that situation.

**Ms PALMER** - This was raised with me last night. I have not had a conversation with Mr Jaensch about that, but we have put that on our list in our office to have a discussion with him. That is in the education space.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - It is. It is interesting, isn't it, that they get a lot of funding for many of those students who go to that school through the NDIS or some program. I am interested where your department is at. You have said you are going to have a conversation with him. How will you report that back to us? Is there a way of doing that?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, it is also important to state, first of all, it is a matter for the minister for Education. Secondly, the NDIS, we do not run the NDIS. We do not operate the NDIS, that is a national program run through the NDIA. As I say, it was raised with me last night. I would like to know a little bit more about that. I will be having a conversation with Mr Jaensch and I can report back. I can converse with you directly if you wish, or you are most welcome to ask me a question on the Floor any time, whichever suits.

**CHAIR** - Just to follow up on that, Mike has had some representations. I have too. I have a number of families who have children with a range of disabilities who use the North West Support School. Some of their key concerns are about adequate parking, accessibility. I asked a question on notice recently about that and I was assured that would be addressed.

It may interest you and these are my thoughts are on it, some of these children with a variety of disability require prompt attendance of parents to assist with any de-escalation or dealing with some sort of disability-related medical event. The further away the parents live, if they have to drive from Boat Harbour to Burnie, they will have to go from Boat Harbour to Penguin. That is the real concern for them. In terms of your discussions with Mr Jaensch - I am glad you are going to talk to him - will you commit to make him aware of these legitimate challenges? Perhaps if we can direct some of these families to you. These are children who have disabilities; that is why they are there.

**Ms PALMER** - I am more than happy to have discussions with them. I do need to remind you that this is a matter that rests with the minister for Education. I am jotting down some of the comments that are being made around the table here. It will be good to have a conversation with Mr Jaensch to make sure that these issues are certainly front and foremost in his mind. But this is a matter for the Education department.

**CHAIR** - I accept that it is. The children who use the service have a range of disability needs. A responsive parent. In terms of time, the parents are responsive, but if they are a long way away.

**Ms PALMER** - We are probably getting a little bit off the budget Estimates. Perhaps if you wanted to write me a letter as the Disability minister, if you wanted to put some of those concerns down.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, departmentally, where does disability sit within DPAC? Is it a deputy secretary?

**Ms GALE** - Disabilities is part of our new Community Partnerships and Priorities division. There is a deputy secretary, and Ms Hurworth is the acting deputy secretary at the moment. Ingrid's team works within that CPP division.

## PUBLIC

**Mr DUIGAN** - Minister, smoke detectors and fire alarms are something those of us who here will take for granted. What options are available to people who are deaf or hard of hearing to keep them safe in case of fire?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much. This is a great opportunity for me to make an announcement here that I really wanted to make in the Legislative Council because this was part of the discussions that were had in the Legislative Council's inquiry into Disability Services. I was a member of that committee before I became the minister. I am delighted to be able to share with you that the Tasmanian government has committed to providing \$25 000 to ensure that those who are not covered by the NDIS can access visual smoke alarms.

Currently, the NDIS funds smoke alarms appropriate to disability for NDIS participants but unfortunately this funding has not been available for people over 65 or those with disability who are without an NDIS plan. Based on the information provided by Expression Australia, the peak body for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, I am pleased to announce that the Rockliff government has decided to fund access to this important risk-minimising device for this group in 2022-23 budget.

The smoke alarms recommended by Expression Australia are Bellman smoke alarm packs. They come with a smoke alarm; they also come with a light tower and they also have a bed shaker and they retail for about \$685. Under the suggested subsidy scheme, eligible users will pay an out of pocket fee of \$50 unless they hold a concession card with the rest to be covered by the Tasmanian government. To be eligible you need to be deaf or hard of hearing and be a resident of Tasmania and not be eligible for another funding scheme, such as the NDIS.

We are now working closely with the Tasmania Fire Service to determine the exact details and the parameters of that program. Communications for the community will be provided shortly. I am excited that these devices will be rolled out to areas of need. Thank you for the question.

**CHAIR** - Can I follow up on that one. It is something that I have raised in the past and it is a relatively new innovation. It has been around for a while now. Someone like myself who has hearing aids, you take them out and if I lay on that side I cannot hear a thing; if I lay on that side I am fine. People like that or people who one partner may have hearing aids the other not, they sleep together all the time. When you talk about the eligibility, so is that eligibility assessed for the hard of hearing as opposed to the profoundly deaf?

**Ms PALMER** - We are working through the exact details and the parameters of the program now. We have some preliminary numbers of how many people in Tasmania that this might actually benefit. For people under 65 on the NDIS, this is covered. The real issue has been for those over 65s who are not on the NDIS. There is a pocket of Tasmanians who have just missed out and been on the edge of all the other funding opportunities. The exact details and the parameters of it are being done now. That is something that when we do our communications to the community we will be able to set out exactly what the eligibility is and make sure we get that information out to people, so that if they do meet the eligibility they can apply.

**CHAIR** - How will you put that information out?

## PUBLIC

**Ms PALMER** - We haven't done our communications package yet.

**Ms GANLEY** - The Tasmania Fire Service has a section for people with disability and there's current information there. I am anticipating we will just add to that.

**Ms PALMER** - I think there would also be a media opportunity as well in using social media to ensure that information gets out.

**CHAIR** - A lot of these will be older people, though not all of them. Is engaging with organisations like COTA that deal directly with that cohort something you would consider?

**Ms PALMER** - Absolutely. You don't set up a program and then hope nobody comes and uses it. I am excited about this and the idea is to make sure that we get this information out to the mainstream as much as we can. Even using the electorate offices of members to get this information out to people - you know, your constituents in your area. It's an exciting program and we will certainly be making sure that the communications strategy is appropriate and that we get this message out to the people who are going to need it.

**CHAIR** - Up on the north-west, East Ulverstone used to have a facility that was integrated into the normal school. Children who had hearing impairments tended to go East Ulverstone Primary School because that was where the AUSLAN interpreters and the supports were. There're others probably clearly identifiable. Those children are probably on an NDIS package, I imagine.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I would like to talk about getting more disability housing on line. Do you have any views on what could be done better? We've talked to some stakeholders. They can build their houses in next to no time, but the approval pathway for actually getting that housing built - because they are prefab, they can build their houses in less than a week, but they are talking about hundreds of days to get them approved to be built and put on the blocks. Do you have those conversations about how we can cut that sort of red tape for a priority housing group? Perhaps, while we are talking about it, the problem has been addressed on other sides.

I know that at Latrobe, some concessions were made by that council to - not necessarily cut corners, but to be more adaptive. Yet, considering it was disability housing, there was a lot of disappointment that the housing was then turning up for anyone off the street to rent. Now that's private, but I am just interested in your views on how potentially things in the planning space could be done better for people with disability.

**Ms PALMER** - Again, we are moving to that housing space, which is -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Of course, but almost everything that we are going to ask you has touch points in other portfolios.

**Ms PALMER** - If you give me a chance, I will finish. While you are moving into that housing space, I can make some comments around this to highlight a couple of things. Homes Tasmania owns a portfolio of over 400 properties that are dedicated to accommodating particularly vulnerable cohorts, with wraparound supports in place. In addition to these homes, when someone with exceptional needs is identified and the usual housing options have been exhausted, government or non-government agencies can actually approach Homes Tasmania for assistance. Homes Tasmania can determine the need for immediate prioritisation and

allocation of social housing. In this event, social housing providers will work closely with Homes Tasmania to identify an available and appropriate home. In most cases, these specialist allocations will be made to vulnerable people who are experiencing exceptional and multiple needs and who are receiving support services to help keep them in their homes.

When the 2022 National Construction Code Livable Housing Design provisions were adopted. We are going to be putting them in place in Tasmania from 2024. New housing constructed will now need to be designed to comply with enhanced access and mobility features. This is expected to reduce the demand for purpose-built disability housing. That means that when houses are being built there will be that expectation, and indeed, a need to comply with making sure those houses do have access and mobility features. We are moving into an area where we need to see real change right across the board and a real cultural change in ensuring all homes that are built, there is a thought that goes into that that this will be accessible for people with disabilities, people with mobility issues and as we are an ageing population, for older people. I was really pleased to see that Tasmania will be putting that in place in 2024.

**CHAIR** - I know there has been issues particularly for younger adults who should not really be in aged care facility, who are there because they have a disability. It seems the most unsuitable place. To enable some to move out they would have required the installation of hoists and hoist tracks from the bedroom to the bathroom and things like that. Obviously, these need to be designed into the construction as I am sure Dean would know you can't just stick a hoist on a regular ceiling and hope it stays up.

What does your department do in this area? I know of a really unfortunate situation of a constituent with Huntington's Disease, who was in an aged care facility, most inappropriately, and suffered as a result of that. But we could not get her, even though housing units were being built around the place that could have managed, but we could not get the approvals to put the appropriate structures in the ceiling to build those requirements.

**Ms PALMER** - It is a really interesting conversation on young people in aged care facilities. It has been raised with Mr Shorten at our meetings with disability ministers from across all the states and territories. We would like to see that reduced right across Australia, the number of young people who find themselves in aged care facilities. In saying that, it is really important to acknowledge that for some young people, that is their choice. That is where they want to go.

**CHAIR** - It was not this person's choice, I can assure you.

**Ms PALMER** - I am sure there are many where it isn't. But there are some where it is. Across all of these conversations, we have to ensure the main thing here is choice that people have the choice to live where they wish to live. We need to make sure our role is they have the choice, they can make that choice and we have in place what we need, that housing stock to ensure there is that choice.

Again, I am trying to be careful because I am treading into the housing area which is not my portfolio. Can I just say, a significant number of special allocations are for people in medical institutions or young people living with disabilities in residential aged care who are awaiting discharge into secure and suitable housing? Their housing support needs may therefore include ongoing management of medical equipment and the attendant difficulties of



accommodating extra equipment and limited mobility in our housing stock that was not designed for such a resident. Housing for children and youth services are homes made available to children and youth people in residential out of home care. There are 33 units provided state-wide for this program.

Of course, there is also the specialist disability accommodation. These are homes made available to the NDIS participants and disability support providers. Typically, a group home setting with about four residents, for people who require housing, designed with accessibility feature to accommodate often extreme functional impairment or very high support needs. I think there are over 230 provided state-wide for this program.

**CHAIR** - I am not sure if you are or not minister, but Emmerton Park at Smithton is an aged care facility where they are building a dedicated wing to look after younger people with disabilities. I am happy to take you down there. It is under construction at the moment. They raise money in their community to fund these things, as Jenny would know, being a good Circular Head woman that she is. That is well under way currently, but that was a definite need because there was a number of young people in Circular Head with significant disability, often as a result of traffic accidents, sadly, and they're trying to meet the needs of local people there.

One of the areas that you cover here is advocacy funding. Do you have a breakdown of the organisations that you fund under that and how much each organisation gets?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, I do. In 2022-23, Speak Out Association of Tasmania - \$363 408 -

**CHAIR** - Give a shout-out to Judy Huett - a fantastic woman from the north-west, a very strong advocate.

**Ms PALMER** - The Association for Children with a Disability Tasmania - \$405 813; Advocacy Tasmania - \$379 791. That's a total of \$1 149 012.

**CHAIR** - Have any of these organisations been seeking increases in funding in their budget submissions of late?

**Ms PALMER** - I will ask Ms Ganley to comment on that.

**Ms GANLEY** - The advocacy services have been in contact with us around the increase in demand through both the rollout of the NDIS and the royal commission and they have received some Commonwealth funding to support the royal commission. We're also participating in the development of a national advocacy framework that the ministers' reform meetings are looking at how advocacy is covered across Australia as a joint funding program between the Australian Government and the states and territories.

**CHAIR** - You may not be able to answer this, Minister, but the state provides \$1.15 million. Do you know how much the Australian Government puts into these areas currently?

**Ms PALMER** - No, we don't have that information here.

**Mr DUGAN** - Thanks, Chair. Minister, you mentioned earlier in your comments that there is a great deal happening in the disability space nationally but also here in Tasmania we're

about to see new contemporary disability legislation which will replace the current 2011 act. Could you provide some detail about the intent of the new Disability Inclusion Bill and how it's coming along?

**Ms PALMER** - We have some exciting things happening in the disability space here in Tasmania so thank you very much for the question. We are committed to our state being a place where people with disability can fully participate in every aspect of life - be it economic, social, political and community life. Above all else, we want Tasmania to be a place where all Tasmanians live free from abuse, neglect and exploitation so we've listened to Tasmanians with a disability and we've embarked on a review of the Disability Services Act 2011. The purpose of the review has been to create a piece of legislation that provides a contemporary vision for a safe and inclusive Tasmania for people with a disability.

We undertook extensive consultation with stakeholders between October 2021 and April 2022 and this feedback was collated into a publicly available report. I am very proud to say that the voices of Tasmanians with disability, their carers and their families have informed the drafting of the new legislation at that grassroots level.

The Government has considered the outcomes of the consultation and we are creating an entirely new disability act - not amending the old one but creating an entirely new one - and this is going to strengthen the Government's commitment to building an equitable and accessible state to achieve better outcomes for Tasmanians with disability. The drafting of that new Disability Inclusion Bill is underway at the moment. The intent of the new legislation is to establish principles that promote the human rights of people with disability and the full and effective inclusion of people with disability in the Tasmanian community.

It is intended to achieve this by establishing a framework to support a whole-of-government approach to inclusion of Tasmanians with disability in all areas of life. The new legislation allows for the appointment of the Tasmanian Disability Commissioner, an important mechanism for Tasmanians living with disability to file complaints, to obtain referrals and also to streamline services. The Office of the Disability Commissioner is expected to be fully operational in 2024. At the moment we have our Interim Disability Commissioner in place and she is scoping out what that role needs to be. The aim is that we will have our actual disability commissioner fully operational by 2024.

It is anticipated that a new disability bill will be ready for consultation within the coming months and this time frame will enable people with disabilities and other stakeholders to appropriately consider whether it meets their needs and for feedback to be considered within the final bill. I am looking forward to seeing the Disability Inclusion Bill tabled in parliament towards the end of this year, in fact really excited about it. It is going to be a good body of work.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I have a question about comms. Does the Government have any policies or strategies in place about how best to communicate government information to people with disability?

**Ms PALMER** - There are a number of great ways that we communicate. One of the best resources that I have is my ministerial disability council, which is a meeting of a number of people around the state so we can actually have time together, which is fantastic. There is also the Premier's Disability Advisory Council. For more on that I will refer to Ms Ganley.

**Ms GANLEY** - As a government agency, we all need to ensure that our websites and information is web accessible, meets the disability standard and therefore any documents we produce meet that standard and can be read through any devices people use. We also are working towards, and it is happening across a range of government programs now, where we are accessing Speak Out in particular to translate documents into what we call easy English so they are much easier for people to understand. We have worked quite closely with Health and they are now using Speak Out on a regular basis. We are continuing to grow that communication device and ensuring, as with all people, that any communication is provided in a range of formats, including the ability to have AUSLAN when needed.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - It is a huge challenge to get everyone's head around how best to communicate. I am just wondering, and please take this in the spirit it is intended, do you think there is a possibility that we need firmer policies about how all communication - when you deal with people in this sector, for instance, their business cards have braille and things like that, and now I have just had business cards printed that don't have it on them through the parliament. Is it something we need to look at that we can do these sort of things a lot better? No-one is here is blaming anyone, it is a very hard thing to stay on top of when you have multiple departments and different people running the show. Would a centralised disability communication strategy or something like that be something that we should perhaps look at?

**Ms GALE** - Interestingly, DPAC previously had responsibility for whole-of-government communications about government policy. Unfortunately, over COVID-19 we had to put our resources elsewhere. But we have just been asked again to reinvigorate that work. It will include for people with disability, disability services and so on. At the moment, minister, I cannot indicate a timeframe by which we would have that completed, but it is on our work plan.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I appreciate the challenge you have in this portfolio that there are touch points that are literally your whole budget. Everyone sees what a great document, the gender snapshot is. We all want one. Is it worth considering something along those lines in disability?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you very much. I am going to ask Ms Hurworth to speak to that.

**Ms HURWORTH** - DPAC has a really central role in assisting the Government to continue its efforts to improve its flexibility of communication and regularly provides feedback to us. Accessibility of Government information will also be a key focus on the accessible items, which is Tasmania's holistic disability framework. The other thing I would add, in terms of having something similar to a gender budget snapshot for disability is the Tasmanian Government is a member of the Australian Network on Disability. That organisation provides the capacity for government agencies to do self-assessment of how accessible they are, both as employers and as service providers. DPAC will be going through that self-assessment process in the next 12 months. It will be the first agency to do so in Tasmania.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Thank you, and I do get it.

**Ms PALMER** - I can actually add to that. I was talking about the new legislation that will be coming through. The intent of that legislation is to establish principles that serve to promote the human rights of people with disability and the full and effective inclusion of people

with disability in our community. It is intended to achieve this by establishing a framework to support a whole-of-government approach to inclusion of Tasmanians with disability in all areas of life. That is including a requirement for development of Tasmanian disability inclusion plan. This would set out the purpose of the plan and responsibilities for developmental implementation, consultation requirements and reporting requirements and publication requirements.

A requirement for disability inclusion plan is to be developed by defined entities. This would define the purpose of the plan, who needs to develop a plan, consultation requirements, timeframes for developmental review and reporting requirements and publication. Also a requirement for development of a guideline to assist with the consultation inclusion and preparation of the Tasmanian disability inclusion plan and disability action plan.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I am sure you are probably expecting this question. I know you dealt with this at the session downstairs yesterday. We also brought it up with the Premier who referred us to your engagement. How better can the engagement process go in the next 12 months around that funding asked? For the sake of context, obviously you have spoken a little bit in this Chamber and other places about the fact the Shepherd Centre engaged with the Government with an ask for \$360 000 over three years, which, through the process of engagement - I know you made some comments about this - was not in the Budget. Obviously, we know the cost of not doing early intervention can turn up in other documents, such as the literacy program the Premier announced, which is a larger quantum of money.

What is the best pathway forward to ensure that we don't miss out on these services being launched in Tasmania? I'm not interested in a history lesson on it from what we've been talking about. In the spirit of trying to be constructive about this, what's the best pathway forward to not miss that opportunity?

**Ms PALMER** - There's a couple of points I'll make with this if you can bear with me. The first thing is that we need to remember that this is an NDIS provider from New South Wales who has come to Tasmania at the end of last year and had already started to establish itself here. Through the Disability Services portfolio, our contribution to the NDIS is through that one big amount of money, that \$285 million. That is how we contribute as a state to the NDIS, which is encompassing the NDIS providers. That is inclusive of the ILC funding. There is a mechanism through the NDIS with that ILC funding for organisations, such as the Shepherd Centre, to go to. As I spoke to as part of that review, it has been acknowledged by the Commonwealth and by the NDIA that there needs to be more flexibility around that.

That is the funding that is available through the NDIS. That is the first thing that I want to step out. I have had one preliminary engagement with them, which was just a few weeks ago, and have already said that I would like to meet with them again. That will be hosting them here at the Legislative Council and that conversation is continuing. The first face-to-face that I had with them was literally within a matter of weeks of the budget. I have said that I would like to continue that conversation. When I did meet with them, I ask them if they had gone through that avenue of ILC funding and they said that they hadn't, so I did suggest to them that that might be a good place for them to start. I explained that our state has that one bucket of money that we put in that supports the NDIS.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - You said you'll engage with them, which is great. That's where the Premier directed us on Tuesday. Will you be stepping that through Health as well? Who will

have oversight and how is this going to proceed over the next 12 months? Should we be talking to the Health minister or yourself?

**Ms PALMER** - The Shepherd Centre to talk to whoever they would like to talk to. I have already said to them that as Disability Services minister I am happy and keen to continue the conversation with them but I'm not going to pre-empt what that conversation is or where we go from there. As I would with any stakeholder, whether they are an NDIS provider, whether they're a family, whether they're an advocacy group, I'll always engage in conversation. I have no issue with that. I can't comment on things outside of my remit as Disability Services minister. That's the conversation that I had with them on 9 May when I met with them. We are moving forward from there.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - We are having a lot of trouble, particularly in southern Tasmania, with bus services and them being cancelled and the communication of that. I've had contact with stakeholders and some regular punters, people. Have you had any engagement with the minister for Transport, or Metro, about the services for people with disabilities - who rely on them - can best be delivered at a time when services are being cancelled?

**Ms PALMER** - I've had a number of conversations with the Transport minister with regard to transport for people with disability, particularly in the taxi space. He and I have been working on, particularly in the taxi space -

**Mr EDMUNDS** - I know you've been trying to do a lot of work around the bus stops as well, with the grants and things like that.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, we have been, as well as ensuring we have buses that are disability accessible. For any further detail you'll obviously need to speak to the Transport minister.

One of the hardest conversations I've had was with a woman who had gone to a family celebration, and the taxi that had been booked to pick her up at the end of the night didn't turn up. She had to have her wheelchair put in the back of someone's ute, and then had to travel very inappropriately.

These are the stories that come to me, which is why we've been working really hard in this space. The Transport minister has been great. We've identified that we, as a Government, need to put more strategies in place to ensure that these transport options are available for people with disabilities. As I said before, for them to live a full life, we must provide a structure that offers them choice.

**Mr EDMUNDS** - Yes, and taxis are obviously a finite resource, and if the bus is cancelled you have to use your other pool of money and that can create a lot of challenges.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Unless there are other pressing questions, we'll move to the Prevention of Family Violence portfolio.

**Output group 7**

Community Partnerships and Priorities

**7.5 Safe Homes, Families, Communities:**

**Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. We will move on to your portfolio for Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. You previously introduced these people at the table but for the benefit of Hansard would you please introduce your team, and then make a brief opening statement. that would be great.

**Ms PALMER** - I welcome Ms Jenny Gale, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet; Ms Courtney Hurworth, Acting Deputy Secretary Community Partnerships and Priorities; and Mr Brett Noble, Acting Director, Community Policy and Engagement. I thank them very much for being here today.

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to make a few comments before we go into questions. I begin by recognising the deep history and the culture of this island and acknowledge and pay my respects to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the past and present custodians of the land on which we meet and gather.

I also acknowledge mayor, Mary Knowles OAM, who has been instrumental in championing the voice of victim/survivors of family violence over many years. Mary was the consultation ambassador for the development of our third Tasmania Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan and I thank her for her continuing work in this area.

I also acknowledge the members of this Chamber who are involved in advocacy and leadership in our frontline family and sexual violence services. I know your passion and your commitment in this area. And I acknowledge the work of my predecessor as minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, Jacquie Petrusma. She was truly a champion inside and outside of government in this space.

Family violence and its impacts touch all areas of government. It reaches into education, health, housing, justice and police. Our third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-27: Survivors at the Centre, which is backed by an investment of \$100 million over the five years of the plan, provides a blueprint for our coordinated and strategic effort across government and in partnership with the community sector.

My role as minister is to keep the prevention and response to family and sexual violence at the top of the priority list for all members of Cabinet. My role is also to facilitate the voice of victim/survivors, working with the community to ensure their voice is at the centre of government decision-making. This is another key action in Survivors at the Centre and I'm pleased this week to have opened expressions of interest for Tasmania's first Victim Survivors' Advisory Council. This council, comprised of victim/survivors of family and sexual violence, will be instrumental in advising me and the Government on implementation of Survivors at the Centre. It has taken some time for us to establish this council that is trauma-informed and is truly survivor-led. I thank our community partners for their expertise in establishing and supporting the council and I respectfully encourage victim/survivors who are ready to apply for membership of the council.

We launched Survivors at the Centre in November last year. It was informed by over 1000 voices, victim/survivors from all walks of life and community sector partners with professional expertise. Part of our consultation involved workshops to understand the needs of diverse communities. These workshops are focused on regional and rural communities, Tasmanians with disability, LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians, older Tasmanians and culturally and linguistically diverse Tasmanians, including recent migrants on humanitarian and work visas.

One of the main themes we heard through this consultation was the need to ensure that our responses meet the needs of diverse Tasmanians. I'm also pleased that we've opened the Family and Sexual Violence Supporting Diverse Communities Grants Program and we will provide funding of up to \$150 000 for community-based projects or enhanced service capability to support inclusion and diversity. This is an important program that enables our community partners to build their capability and capacity in areas they have identified as a need. Most importantly, it will ensure the critical services are able to meet the needs of all Tasmanians.

Working towards a Tasmania free from violence is a priority of this Government and we are undertaking a broad scope of work across all areas. I commend my fellow ministers for their investments to addressing family and sexual violence in housing, health, education, justice and policing. I know there will be questions so, Chair, I thank you and the committee members for the opportunity to make a few comments. I am happy to take any questions relating to this portfolio.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister.

**Ms LOVELL** - On page 226 of the budget papers, I will just read that last line:

This output also includes funding for family and sexual violence responses outside of the Action Plan.

Can you outline what some of those responses are?

**Ms PALMER** - Can you just tell me that page again?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, sure, page 226, right at the bottom of the page, in the description, where it is talking about the output. It says, this output also includes funding for family and sexual violence responses outside of the action plan. What are those responses?

**Ms PALMER** - I will seek some advice on that.

**Ms LOVELL** - If you have a breakdown of the funding allocated.

**Ms PALMER** - I can give you a breakdown here of that, \$15.1 million over two years to pilot the establishment of Tasmania's first multi-disciplinary centres in the north and south of the state to ensure victim/survivors of sexual violence receive immediate coordinated support in a safe place. That is the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. This is money we are talking about outside of the \$12.5 million you see, that has been committed over the forward Estimates. There is also \$4.9 million per annum for five years from 2022-23 to 2026-27 for Safe at Home, which is Tasmania's criminal justice response to family violence. There is \$3.7 million over four years to provide next generation technology and instruments

for our scientists to ensure higher quality evidence for court proceeding. An increased capacity for evidence storage. That is including sexual evidence kits so victim/survivors can have their forensic examples taken, knowing their evidence will be kept indefinitely until they feel they are ready to make a report to the police.

There is also \$4.8 million over five years from 2023-23 to 2026-27 for family violence rapid rehousing and \$277 000 in the 2022-23 year for Hobart Women's Shelter emergency response. In 2023-24 this funding will increase to \$432 000 and continue to 2026-27.

**Ms LOVELL** - Those allocations for funding are not in this line item in table 9.13B, in other budgets.

**Ms PALMER** - Correct.

**Ms LOVELL** - I have a question about the performance indicators. This is just a question to make sure I understand it fully, the way it has been expressed. On page 228, you have:

Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan; Survivors at the Centre 2022-27.

The performance indicator is:

Actions on schedule against the milestones and timeframes.

I know the footnote says they have been revised downwards because the actuals and the target related to the second plan, now we have the third plan. My question is, the 2023-24 target of 20 per cent, is that 20 per cent of all of the milestones and time frames in the plan? It's not for the milestones that were set for that year, is it?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes, we were discussing this yesterday. The 20 per cent is the target that we would set to achieve of the entire plan, not 20 per cent of the milestones for that year of the plan.

**Ms LOVELL** - That's what I wanted to clarify, yes.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Of the 38 actions, it equates to eight actions, five of which we've already completed for this year, three of which are on track.

**Ms LOVELL** - Maybe add that to the footnote next year. That makes sense, thank you.

**CHAIR** - A couple here, Minister. In the action plan most of those things are outlined that sit outside the allocation in this. I fully declare my interest in being an honourable member of Engender Equality. On the 37 per cent in core funding for frontline family and sexual services with five-year contracts, can you tell us which services are getting that increase and the five-year contracts?

**Ms PALMER** - I can. Anglicare through RAIN, which is north-west coast; Engender Equality, Huon Domestic Violence Service, Yemaya, SafeChoices, Laurel House, SASS, ACF, which is the Australian Childhood Foundation, and SVCSS, which is the government.



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**CHAIR** - Have you got a breakdown of how much each is getting now? Would it be easiest to provide the table? You've got forward Estimates in it.

**Ms PALMER** - I can, but it's up to you. I have it right here. Do you want it for 2023-24?

**CHAIR** - For the forward Estimates.

**Ms PALMER** - This will be quite easy. Anglicare RAIN 2023-24, \$374 695. It is the same across the forward Estimates.

**CHAIR** - Okay, right.

**Ms PALMER** - That's because indexation is applied every year.

**CHAIR** - So that's the base, plus CPI, yes?

**Ms PALMER** - Sorry, Engender Equality, \$1 441 422, and it's the same across. Huon Domestic Violence Service, \$353 325, the same for all four. It's the same for all four for all of them. I won't keep saying that. Yemaya, in 2023-24, \$684 907; Safe Choices, \$1 209 000; Laurel House, \$2 035 086; SASS, \$2 494 266; ACF, \$1 337 500; and SVCSS, \$4 581 600.

**CHAIR** - For all of those organisations, is that predominantly or wholly to provide counselling services and support? I'm thinking of a deed of agreement.

**Ms PALMER** - In the list that I have just given you, Anglicare RAIN is not counselling. SafeChoices is not counselling. It's across those other ones, Engender, Huon, Yemaya, Laurel, SASS, and the other ones that we've mentioned. That's the counselling.

**CHAIR** - Including the Australian Childhood Foundation?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes. Sorry, SASS, Australia Childhood Foundation and the SVCSS.

**CHAIR** - Do you have any insight into the waiting times for, particularly in the counselling space, how long the waiting times are for those organisations or do you not track that?

**Ms PALMER** - It does come under the portfolio of Mr Street. I think I have that, in some of that information here.

**CHAIR** - Their waiting times?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, that comes under minister Street

**CHAIR** - For those that provide state-wide services too are they broken down by region or just a top line figure?

**Ms PALMER** - This is by region and I will give you the March ones, I have January and February but just give you the March one. This is Engender and the Huon Domestic Violence Service, current clients are 231 in the south, there is a wait list of 102 and the average waiting time is 175 days. For Yemaya and Engender in the north, current clients 150, wait list 36 and

the average wait time is 60 days. I will go to RAIN and Engender, RAIN has no wait list and Engender is recruiting to fill a vacancy on the north west coast. My understanding for the north west is there are 80 clients there, 12 on a waiting list with an average waiting time of 60 days.

**CHAIR** - Minister, you talked about the victim/survivor advisory council is part of the plan, in terms of recruiting we know there is a diversity of people who are impacted and victims of family violence. I note the \$1.4 million to develop a children and young people's understanding of consent or as control and grooming. A lot of very young women are victims of coercive control. If you have ever listened to the podcast The Trap there is one episode in particular focused on young women. How are we going to ensure in that group you actually get representatives from the very young women or very young victims. Those with a disability who we know are another at risk group, culturally linguistically diverse, Aboriginal people and members of the LGBTIQ+ community because these are all featureable highly in family violence and the general cohort.

**Ms PALMER** - As you can appreciate a lot of thought and research has had to go into the establishment of this advisory group. I mentioned in my opening comments a really trauma informed process and we have a number of stakeholders; Engender and the Sexual Assault Support Service who are also involved in giving advice. I am going to pass over to Ms Hurworth to lay out for you how that is actually coming together because we have tried very, very carefully in setting up this advisory council.

**Ms HURWORTH** - In the process of setting up this advisory council, we met with the Victorian government multiple times, because they were one of the first states and territories to have such an advisory council. Their first council was not very representative because they did not do the work they needed to do to ensure members of the community felt such a council could be a place they could participate in.

This time we've taken a lot of their learnings, and we'll be working with our frontline family and sexual violence providers. The initial conversation started with a bigger group - with Engender Equality, SASS, Women's Legal and a range of others. We'll also be working with Working It Out, for example, the Youth Network of Tasmania (people aged 18-25 years) and other peak bodies to ensure people have the information they need, and tailored information for whatever their circumstances are.

**CHAIR** - Are you talking to the Commissioner for Children and Young People? Some may be under 18 years.

**Ms HURWORTH** - The council will only be for people aged over 18 years. In the development of the action plan, we had a lot of consultation with the commissioner about how to capture the voices of children in a way that was very safe. Those conversations are ongoing, but part of the work on consent and coercive control is being led by the Department of Education, Children and Young People, so we expect we'll be able to get voices through that way.

**Ms PALMER** - I might also add that with the expressions of interest that are now open, it's our intention it will be represented by people with a real diversity of experience, including those with lived experience in culturally diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ Tasmanians, older Tasmanians and those living with disability, and also those living in our regional and rural communities, as well as Aboriginal people.

As Ms Hurworth has laid out for you, there's been a very thorough consultation process around this.

**CHAIR** - I think you would be aware, minister, that for women living in rural areas, particularly rural areas that are quite conservative, there's a whole different range of factors that prevent those women leaving, so it's important that we do hear from women in those isolated communities.

**Ms LOVELL** - Minister, I want to ask about the data breach that happened earlier in the year. I understand that's not your portfolio, but the reason I ask is because when that happened there was significant concern from victim-survivors of family violence about where their data might end up, and who might have access to it. Were you or your department consulted at all about the response to that data breach from a family violence perspective?

**Ms PALMER** - I will ask the secretary to comment on that.

**Ms GALE** - Thank you. Through you, minister, as a result of becoming aware that information had been leaked onto the dark web, the first port of call for the investigation into that information was to identify whether there were any vulnerable people at risk. As a result, the Department of Education, Children and Young People worked across agencies, including our own, in relation to the nature of the data. Agencies very quickly cross-checked their information to make sure those people who may have been vulnerable were contacted quickly.

**CHAIR** - Just going back to [Survivors at the Centre. There are some quite disturbing statistics in this. I think most of us know - or should, if we don't - that one woman a week is killed by her partner, former or current. Another disturbing statistic is that one in three Australians believe rape is a result of men not being able to resolve their need for sex. Two in five Australians believe women make up false reports of sexual assault in order to punish men. Clearly the evidence doesn't support those notions, so how do you plan to dispel those pretty shocking myths that have no basis in reality?

**Ms PALMER** - We know that violence damages the physical and mental health of victims/survivors and has significant short and long-term negative impacts, particularly on children, and that impacts significantly on our communities. Our community consultation approach included five key elements, one of which was a hearing lived-experience survey that was open for 12 months. It is important to understand that relaying family and sexual violence experiences can be traumatic. This provided people a chance to have their say at a time that was safe and right for them.

**CHAIR** - It was good having QR codes on the back of public toilet doors, I must say, they are everywhere.

**Ms PALMER** - Over 700 responses were received from Tasmanians across the state. People who shared their story with us were mainly women aged 35 to 54 years, and who were born in Australia. Of the responses, 93 per cent were from women; 54 per cent were from people 35 to 54 years of age; 6 per cent were from people 18 to 24 years; 81 per cent of responses were from people who identified as heterosexual; 9 per cent of responses were from people born outside of Australia; 19 per cent were from people with disability; and 50 per cent of responses were from people with dependent children.

Victims/survivors shared that they are aware of Tasmanian family and sexual violence program services, but concerningly, some feel that they do not believe people would intervene if they witnessed family or sexual violence. In some circumstances, people in their community believe violence is justified, which goes to your question. These continuing traditional attitudes indicate there is room for improvement. All Tasmanians must work together to address these attitudes that deny gender equality and that limit women's autonomy in relationships, that objectify women and disregard consent.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents agreed that 'In my community I hear or see about family violence programs and/or services'; 49 per cent of respondents agreed that 'In my community, I hear or see about sexual violence programs and/or services'; and 46 per cent of respondents disagreed that 'In my community, people would intervene if they witnessed family violence'. Also, 46 per cent of respondents disagreed that 'In my community, people would intervene if they witnessed sexual violence'.

As part of the third action plan, our Government continues to recognise the need to invest in primary prevention activity that challenge and change community attitudes that allow family and sexual violence to occur. To support these primary prevention activities, our Government has been a proud member of Our Watch since 2015. We've built actions into our previous family and sexual violence action plans and as part of our third action plan to build upon this partnership. Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence and works to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

In the 2022-23 state Budget, as part of the \$12.5 million allocation, \$28 000 was provided to continue our Government's membership of Our Watch, and \$135 000 for the Our Watch senior adviser role. Our third action plan and the 2023-24 Budget, the Tasmanian Government is continuing to fund our membership of Our Watch. The Our Watch senior adviser role will continue until 2026-27.

Some interesting work has been done by the Our Watch senior adviser. It is focussed on a couple of key projects. These include the development of ongoing relationships with Tasmania's local government sector through the Local Government Association of Tasmania and local councils to progress local government responses to family and sexual violence. The role will continue to support primary prevention efforts in local government and across local communities in Tasmania and advise the Government on enhancing our efforts to stop family and sexual violence before it starts.

Our Watch has also been working with key sporting organisations - you might be aware of that - including Football Tasmania, AFL Tasmania, to implement its Equality and Respect in Sport program.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Following on from Our Watch, I noticed Jacquie Petrusma's appointment to the - I think it is the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance. I think that the first and only conference of its kind to date in 2016 was in Adelaide. It is long overdue for a second conference with all these strategies being put in place six or seven years ago. Is it worthwhile thinking about Tasmania hosting the second conference? Is that something the Government has thought about, whether the line has any capacity to do this or is it something

you could consider? With the role of Our Watch board and what's happening nationally, it might be an opportunity for Tasmania to hold the second conference here.

**Ms PALMER** - I put on the record my congratulations to Jacquie Petrusma. I believe it's the first time Tasmania's had a seat at that national table and she will be absolutely superb in that role. It's quite possible that she will be making sure Tasmania's very much in the spotlight.

We have just funded Women's Legal Service Tasmania to host a conference on family violence and I understand that's going to be held in June. It's in Launceston next week.

**Mr GAFFNEY** - Is that a statewide or national conference?

**Ms HURWORTH** - It's statewide but it is bringing international experts to Tasmania, including Dr David Mandel who's a specialist in systems abuse.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Minister, could you provide some details on the Family and Sexual Violence Supporting Diverse Communities Grants 2023-24, which you touched on in your opening remarks?

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you. We know the impacts of family and sexual violence can be compounded for some victim/survivors, for example, those with diverse backgrounds or for people living in regional and remote areas.

Our extensive consultation during the development of the third action plan, Survivors at the Centre, was informed by a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure that the design and delivery of our policy and service systems met the needs of all victim/survivors. During 2022, six workshops were held with over 100 stakeholders from the Family and Sexual Violence Services, allied services, advocates and services to specific groups of Tasmanians. These focused on a range of themes, including services to children and young people, culturally and linguistically diverse community, the LGBTIQ+ community, people with disability, people living in regional and remote communities and also older Tasmanians.

An action in Survivors at the Centre is to deliver funding for community-based projects to support inclusion, access and equity, to support diverse Tasmanians who experience barriers for accessing support for family and sexual violence. I'm delighted that through the National Partnership Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence we've allocated \$675 000 for the Family and Sexual Violence: Supporting Diverse Communities Grants Program. This program will focus on the delivery of community-based projects and/or enhanced service capabilities to support inclusion, access and equity for diverse people and groups who experience barriers to support for family and sexual violence.

Applicants will need to demonstrate how they support Tasmanians from diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, women on temporary visas, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ community, older people, and people living in regional, rural and remote locations. Also, there are four priority areas for targeted funding, which includes additional support and/or tailored service delivery, early intervention responses which address non-physical forms of violence, innovative solutions to increase operational capacity and/or build workforce capacity to

respond to diverse communities, and improving evidence and data collection. The grant application process is open until 1 August of this year.

**CHAIR** - Are there any programs that are funded through this output group to deal with the behaviour of the perpetrators? We are talking about crime prevention. Or is that the responsibility of someone else?

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you for the question. Elimination will only occur if we stop it at the start by addressing the underlying drivers of violence by providing early intervention for those who are at higher risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence. Our government is committed to strengthening the service system, holding perpetrators to account, and providing them with avenues to change their violent behaviours. Key components of our nationally-recognised integrated criminal justice response to family violence, Safe at Home, provide timely and appropriate responses to perpetrators who use violent and controlling behaviours with access to rehabilitative services and programs. These are essential if we are to achieve a long-term change in offending rates.

The government provides a range of programs designed to reduce offending by family and sexual perpetrators. There are behaviour change programs for men and women that are delivered in the community and within corrections settings, including the Men Employing New Strategies program, it's called MENS, which is delivered by Relationships Australia, Tasmania; EQUIPS, which is delivered by Community Corrections and the Family Violence Officer Intervention Program, delivered by the Tasmanian Prison Service and Community Corrections.

Additionally, there is access to a 24-hour helpline, the Men's Referral Service for low-risk perpetrators, and men who have self-identified the need to change their behaviour. The Men's Referral Service also includes an early intervention component, where perpetrators are called by Tasmania Police within 48 hours of a family violence incident and are offered counselling and referral to appropriate services.

Last year, the Attorney-General tabled the Family Violence Reforms Bill 2022 to allow for participation in behaviour-change programs to be court mandated as part of a family violence order to strengthen the way that our justice system deals with repeat perpetrators of family violence. Our government is committed not only to reducing the incidence of family and sexual violence but also to ensure the protection of victim/survivors. Electronic monitoring provides victim/survivors with an extra level of comfort, provides evidence that can be used in court, and can help prevent victims from having to attend court to actually give that evidence. Electronic monitoring may be a condition of a family violence order made upon application by police to a magistrate. All perpetrators are screened for suitability prior to the application being made.

Additionally, victim/survivors of family violence are given the opportunity to opt-in for bilateral monitoring and can carry a keyring-sized GPS tracking device that can better enhance early detection and warning of an impending proximity breach. Bilateral monitoring is a choice for a victim/survivor as the alerts from the system may cause additional stress and anxiety. Last year, we saw a first for Tasmania with a parolee placed on an indefinite electronic monitoring order because of family violence, and this momentous action speaks volumes for the victim/survivors.

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In addition, in May 2023, our government signed up to an extension of the National Partnership Agreement of Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence 2021-23 in order to secure additional funding over the next four years to 2027 for frontline family and sexual violence support workers and the establishment of innovative perpetrator programs. Tasmania is eligible to receive a total of \$11.774 million in funding under this partnership extension. That is comprised of \$8.649 million toward front line and community sector workers and there's \$3.125 million which is specifically towards innovative perpetrator response programs. The perpetrator response funding will support initiatives aimed at holding offenders to account, preventing them from reoffending, and improving victim protection.

**CHAIR** - A couple of follow-ups to that. How are the outcomes of the broader measures, like the perpetrator programs, monitored and measured? The outcomes in behaviour change and that sort of stuff?

**Ms PALMER** - Chair, that would be a question for the Attorney-General. You would need to put that question to her.

**CHAIR** - This may be for the Attorney-General too, possibly. But where it is not bilateral monitoring, it is just electronic monitoring, before the perpetrator order is made, is the victim also consulted as to whether they want that? It is when it is bilateral monitoring that both parties are obviously consulted. I am just interested whether the victim is notified or their opinion sought on that.

**Ms PALMER** - A question for the Attorney-General.

**CHAIR** - But having dealt with some of these women, it is extremely stressful. I think that is all we have you, minister.

**Ms PALMER** - Can I just make some closing statements. I thank those who are at the table for supporting me across three of my portfolios that come under DPAC this afternoon. Thank you very much for not just being here today to support me but for the extraordinary work that they do across the three portfolios that we had this afternoon. I am also recognising Ms Ganley, who is not at the table but sitting over there. I am very grateful for their support and their advocacy in this space. I thank the committee for the opportunity to answer questions for this portfolio.

**CHAIR** - Did you get the gender breakdown of the people who had done the training, or do you want me to put that on notice to you?

**Ms GALE** - Minister, we would have to do that manually so it will take some time.

**CHAIR** - I will put it on notice. I will write to you. Thank you. We will have a break.

**The Committee suspended from 3.32 p.m. to 4.00 p.m.**